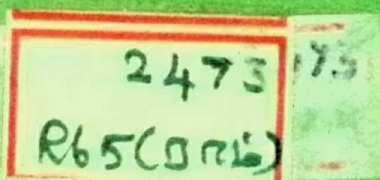


GOD-EXPERIENCE



SWAMI RAMDAS

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SWAMI RAMDAS

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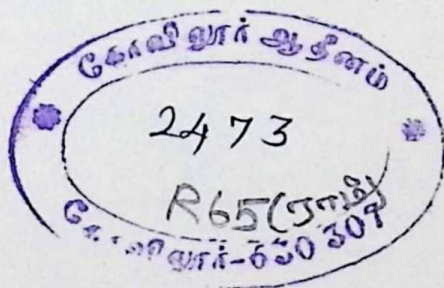
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GOD-EXPERIENCE



By

SWAMI RAMDAS



Third Edition, 1987

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Om Sri Ram jai Ram jai jai Ram

Let your heart be ever
filled with the sweetness
of Ramnam.

All joy and peace to
you.

Hearty Blessings

Ramesh
13. 4. '57

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

We are glad to bring out this book which is a report of the talks given by Swami Ramdas, affectionately called 'Papa' by devotees the world over, at Anandashram during Satsang since the beginning of 1961. The book has been prepared from the authentic notes of talks lovingly recorded by Swami Krishnananda Das, a disciple of Papa. The moments spent by the devotees with the Master at Satsang are the most precious, and a feeble attempt has been made to recapture, in the pages that follow, something of the joy of Satsang and of the mature divine wisdom ever flowing from the lips of the Master.

In the course of these talks, reference has been made about Mataji. Here 'Mataji' stands for Mother Krishnabai of Anandashram.

The book is fittingly titled GOD-EXPERIENCE, because it comprises the teachings of Papa based upon the fulness and richness of his Spiritual Experience.

ANANDASHRAM

Anandashram,
30th July, 1961.

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GOD-EXPERIENCE

7th January, 1961

Ramdas: The question is about omens and auspicious occasions. Suppose Ramdas goes out for Bhiksha at a so-called inauspicious time and as a result of it he does not get anything and goes hungry, so much the better for him. In the same way, as a result of non-observance of these beliefs, if he meets with opposition, dishonour, blame, injuries, he will enjoy them. Whatever comes he will take it as for his good. Ramdas was never influenced by such considerations. Success or failure, good or bad — all were the same to him.

Now, for example, if a building construction is started at an inauspicious hour, the work, it is feared, will be prolonged and sometimes never completed. Here, at Nileshtar, the Government wanted to construct a bridge. Without looking to an auspicious moment they started the work. Nearly four years passed and the work could not be completed. For some reason or other it was delayed. The Chief Engineer in Madras, a devotee of the Ashram, instructed the Superintending Engineer to take Ramdas over there and receive his blessings. Accordingly, a car came and Ramdas went there. They had arranged for Puja — festoons, flowers, cocoanuts, Arati, etc. The function was gone through. Later, the news came that within six months after Ramdas' visit the work was completed! When God's blessings are with you, there is no question of auspicious or inauspicious time.

When Ramdas was going to the forests in his Sadhana days, the villagers used to frighten him.

Wild beasts were roaming about in the forests. Ramdas was sitting there the whole night chanting Ramnam. Nothing untoward happened. If you have implicit faith in God's grace and guidance, no power on earth can frighten or harm you. If you meet with obstacles, so much the better. They come as a test of faith.

But Mataji believes in such things. If a calf is to be given away, she fixes an auspicious day for the purpose. When Ramdas laughs at such things, she says, 'You may laugh.' Sometimes she persuades Ramdas to conform to such practices. "All right", he would say. Why should he resist? But if it were during his Sadhana days, he would not have agreed.

Once Ramdas' right eye was throbbing, Ramdas asked what was its significance — was it a good or a bad sign? Somebody said, 'Throbbing of the right eye is good for men and that of the left eye, for women'. Then Ramdas put the question, 'Is Ramdas a man or a woman?' Mataji replied, 'When the right eye is throbbing, you are a man when the left eye is throbbing, you are a woman! Both are auspicious to you.' So Ramdas is both man and woman, or neither. It means that all times, places, signs, are auspicious to him.

Whenever Ramdas started on his tours, Mataji would fix an auspicious day; and it was never on a Saturday. Many a time when he was wandering alone from place to place, he might have started on Saturdays. He does not remember whether anything untoward happened to him in consequence. Ramdas was daring and fearless. He did not care for auspicious moments and omens.

When Ramdas left his home in 1922 and wandered about without any money, it was his Shani-dasa. It

was Shani that drove him out of his home. When he found this out later, Ramdas did Namaskar to Shani, for it gave him Vairagya. If some good planet was there, it would not have been beneficial to him. Shani-dasa was a boon to him! Some years ago an astrologer came to Ramdas and asked for his horoscope. 'Why?' asked Ramdas. He replied, 'I will read and tell you the planetary influence on your future'. 'Ramdas is playing football with the planets,' said Ramdas. He bowed and quietly left the place. Ramdas does believe in astrology. He believes in the influences of planets on human lives. But by the power of Ram he could digest all situations and could be always perfectly happy. His horoscope is RAM.

8th January, 1961.

Ramdas: Today Ramdas is going to talk about worries. Worry is in the experience of everybody. There is no person who has no worries. In fact, rare is the person who is free from worries. What should we do when worries and anxieties beset us? We should throw our burdens on God and be free from them. We have to depend upon God and leave all our cares to Him, because He is all-powerful, all-loving, all-merciful. Mother has worries, because the child looks up to her for everything. As the child has a mother to look after it, it is free from cares. So when there is God to look after us, why should we worry? If God does not take up our burdens, if He does not worry about us, we are lost.

In this connection Ramdas remembers the story of Saint Damaji, a great devotee of Vithoba of Pandharpur — how he relieved the distress of thousands of starving

fellowmen by a fearless act of charity, and how God saved him by assuming the form of a Pariah.

So what do you want to be? You should be a devotee and also God. When you receive succour from God, you are His devotee; when you are compassionate and are helping others, you are acting the part of God.

Real compassion is Buddha's compassion. It flows out to everybody alike. Ramdas remembers one instance. When he was in Bijapur many years ago, he was the guest of a Gujarati merchant. He was there for two days. Then he wanted to go and beg his food in the streets. He was told that in a certain house Sadhus were given rice, dal and other provisions free. He went there and got everything, which he tied up in his cloth. At that time, a man on the opposite side of the street was watching Ramdas. He ran up and falling at Ramdas' feet, cried, "My wife and two children are starving at home. I am a householder and therefore I will not be given any Bhiksha. Will you give me the provisions which you got now?" Ramdas cheerfully gave it all to him. He was very happy. He addressed Ramdas: 'You are not a human being. You are God. I have received this help from God Himself. You are God incarnate.' Ramdas was thrilled.

So when you go to the rescue of another with a heart full of compassion, you play the part of God Himself. Such acts grant you immense peace and joy. The more you are helpful to the distressed, the more your heart softens. A soft heart is the heart of God. From such a heart relief comes to you also when in trouble.

9th January, 1961.

Ramdas: Sri Krishna in the Bhagvad Gita speaks of Karma Yoga and Karma Sannyas. He says Karma Yoga is superior to Karma Sannyas which, according to ancient custom, was adopted as the fourth stage of life. Brahmacharya, Garhastya, Vanaprastha, Sannyas — these four stages of life have been prescribed in the Shastras from ancient times. Sri Krishna's Avatar was for pointing out a new path for attaining salvation or Moksha. Traditionally a man in the fourth stage lived in the forest as a Sannyasi, stopping worldly work completely. But Sri Krishna said that one could attain the state of liberation even while doing work in the world to the very last. So he established what is called Bhagavata Dharma in which there is no need to renounce anything externally. But inner renunciation is necessary. Otherwise there is no Moksha either for the Sannyasi or for the householder.

Inner renunciation is attained through complete surrender to God — not possessing anything as belonging to oneself but as belonging to God. This dedicated life leads to the dissolution of the ego-sense and the attainment of Jnana. The method employed to reach this stage is to consider oneself as a devotee or a servant of God—Dasya Bhava—'I am Thy servant, Thou art my Master.' He works in the world as a servant of God doing everything for the sake of the Master in order to please Him. Such a devotee need not renounce anything externally. All his actions are done in a spirit of dedication to God.

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव ।
आचार्यदेवो भव । अतिथिदेवो भव ॥

Let your mother be God to you. Let your father be God to you. Let your spiritual preceptor be God to you. Let your guest be God to you."

In this spirit he dwells in the house. Then he is an ideal householder.

He does not reject anything but accepts everything without attachment. Attachment is when you love some and do not love others. You love those who are related to you who are your kith and kin. Beyond the pale of that circle you have no love or concern for anyone. But the ideal householder loves all alike. The neighbour in difficulties is considered in the same light as one who is near and dear to him. This is the right vision and in that vision there is no attachment. It is Moha when your love is confined only to your kith and kin and not extended to others. The sense of 'I and mine' comes into play here, which vitiates your outlook in life.

Householder saints lead their lives in accordance with the Bhagavata Dharma preached by Sri Krishna. You are a householder to serve God. Serve parents, serve guests, serve those who are in distress, looking upon all these as the manifestations of your Master, your God. This vision of seeing the Lord everywhere was held out by Sri Krishna. According to a certain system of philosophy, the world is looked upon as an illusion. So ultimately you discard everything and go to the forest for your salvation. Here it is not so. The same salvation you can attain by living and acting in the world by dedicating your life to God, your beloved Master. There is no bargaining in it. It is spontaneous service cheerfully rendered to God.

Questioner: Results of past Karma stand as obstacles to spiritual progress. The law of Karma operates and clashes occur in the family. What can we do?

Ramdas: This is because of your deliberate unwillingness to live the spiritual life. Whenever you are not able to do it easily, you talk of Karma. But when you go to the office and do all sorts of work for earning money, etc, you do not talk of Karma; nothing comes in your way. Obstacles do not hinder you. Ramdas will tell you of an incident. There was a Munsif at Ernakulam who used to come to Ramdas when he was the guest of a friend there. He was interested in religion. He was doing Puja, Sandhya, etc., regularly in the formal way. He was earning three to four hundred rupees a month. He was a great miser. 'Swamiji, I like sovereigns very much. My love for money is more than for Ramnam. In the evenings I usually go out for a walk. I take some money also with me. On one side of the road I see a beggar sitting. He cries for help. I feel I should give him two annas. By the time I put my hand in the pocket I feel one anna will do. When I take the coin in my hand I think, 'Why an anna? Half an anna is sufficient,' and when taking out the money I take a quarter-anna coin and give it to him. What is this due to?' he asked. 'That is because you love money more than everything else,' said Ramdas.

So it was not past Karma that prevented him from giving that man two annas. It was stinginess, unwillingness. He could get over that. When you have an occasion to do a good thing, you do not will it but plead weakness and hesitate. Here past Karma plays no part. You have the initiative to do other things; you put forth all your energy. In giving

anything in charity you plead that you are weak. You do not want to be liberal. By discrimination you can bring up good thoughts to control your life. You say, 'What can I do? My bad Karma stands in the way.' You have the power to subdue such thoughts. Many do it.

Suppose some people are prone to lead an immoral life and at the same time have a decent position in society. For fear of public censure and losing their prestige, they suppress the temptations. It is in their hands to live a good life or a bad one. Some failures, calamities and losses may come through past Karma. But your present and your future are in your hands.

Q: My eldest son is employed. First daughter is married. Second daughter is to be married. I retired in December, 1957. We can just carry on. We are not rich. For the last ten or twelve years I have been very much interested in scriptures. I have been trying to live a religious life after retirement. I like to read spiritual books and attend religious discourses. My people are against all this. They want me even now to work and earn. The more I earn, the more they spend. Things came to such a pass that I could not but leave that place. I went to the North and visited one or two Ashrams there. But the climate did not suit my health; sometimes food also did not agree with me. In October, I returned to the South. I had a vague idea of this Ashram and somehow God has brought me here. I am peaceful here. I wish to have your advice as to what I should do in the circumstances and whether my action is right or wrong.

Ramdas: Leave things to God and take His name. He will look after everything. Only remember God.

Q: My people say they will look after everything and are happy without me, I also cannot get on with them. But I do not feel that I am fit to adopt Sannyas and go to the forest. At the same time I want a shelter.

Ramdas: You are an unwanted person there. In the present state of things you have done well to come here and you are at peace. Do not worry any more. Leave things entirely to God.

10th January, 1961.

Ramdas: It should not be forgotten that God is the giver. Even if we are earning, the earning power is given to us by Him. So we cannot take pride in having achieved or obtained anything by ourselves. Ramdas has seen some successful businessmen who have earned crores and crores. They say, 'I was a poor man. I was struggling for my very existence. But I conducted my business in such an intelligent way that I began to make good profits. I used more and more of my intelligence. I was very careful and worked hard. So I am a self-made man. I acquired immense wealth by my abilities and cleverness.' Wherefrom did he get the ability and cleverness? God gave him the power, the capacity and the ability. Do you know what happens sometimes in such cases? God sees that he has become proud, and gives him a blow. At one stroke he loses half of his wealth. He thought he was very clever. Where is his cleverness now? Although he may have vast wealth, this is not a small blow to him. Such cases Ramdas has seen. It is better to be humble and give all credit to God for our achievements and successes. If we are puffed up with pride we are likely to fall. If we are humble and meek where is any chance of a fall? So

let us be humble enough to accept that God's will and power is supreme and that by His power alone everything happens.

There are some who are worth lakhs and lakhs. Still they run after more money. When misfortunes come, even millionaires kiss the dust. In big cities this is very common. There is what is called Satta—a kind of gambling. In an hour's time one loses everything and is in the streets without a *naya Paisa*. So king becomes beggar and *vice versa* in an instant. When people are wealthy they take pride in showing off their opulence. Pride lies heavily upon them and they are not happy. Whatever happiness they pretend to have is artificial, not genuine. Remember God constantly. Surrender yourself to Him. Then you are really happy, whether you are rich or poor.

Show of humility is another thing. Outwardly some are humble. Inwardly they are proud. They are worse than those who are openly proud. Their case is very hard. They cannot easily change. The proud man may become humble if he does not pretend to be humble, because he is sincere. Man has got various kinds of conceit—conceit of wealth, learning, high position in life, etc. Even a devotee of God has his own conceit, that he is a greater devotee than others. He looks upon them with contempt. The contemptuous attitude is not good for him. It brings about his fall.

Sri Ramakrishna taught us to say before God, 'I am nothing. You are everything.' Even when you say to God, 'I am your devotee, your child, your servant,' there is some trace of pride. Some say, 'I am the dust of your feet.' Still you are something, you are the dust. There is some room for conceit there. There is no

conceit at all when you say, 'I am nothing'. What wonderful humility and self-effacement you will find in a true devotee! In comparison with the others, the true devotee considers himself inferior to everyone on earth, whatever may be his station in life, his nature, his caste, creed or nationality. Always he has a good word for everyone. Whereas, some pose themselves as superior to others and find fault with them. That is the way of the world. But saints are different. They are pure, guileless and ever cheerful. The secret of this is complete effacement of the self or 'I-ness.' We know how difficult it is to do away with this pride, this self-consciousness, this conceit, this sense of 'I-ness'. One who is intoxicated always with the thought of God is the only one who is free from the ego-sense — not others. Why should we be proud? What is there to be proud of? Pride is the cause of all trouble in the world. Pride dominates the hearts of people.

Some years ago Ramdas met Miss Elizabeth Sharpe in Limbdi. She came to see Ramdas in the company of the Thakore Saheb of Limbdi, Sir Daulat Sinh. She watched Ramdas' movements minutely. She saw him talking, walking, making gestures and answering questions. She wrote about him afterwards, 'I was trying to find out whether Ramdas was posing in any way.' Some people pose that they are saints. They assume airs, gestures and facial expressions to show to the world that they are saints. You will find a great deal of such posing in the world. A certain gravity in their demeanour, a certain force and emphasis in what they say—all this they exhibit in order to pass for great saints. So she watched Ramdas to see whether anything which Ramdas did could be interpreted as posing. She said that she never found it in him. In fact Ramdas

came to know from her that he was not posing. He did not know what he was. He was what God had made him. There is a saying, 'Let us see ourselves as others see us.' Otherwise we are apt to think always highly of ourselves.

Ramdas sees such posings in people and enjoys the fun. He sees it all as through a glass; verily, he is witnessing the Lila of God.

10th January, 1961.

Ramdas: God is a mystery. You cannot say what He is and what He is not. When you think of God, you are baffled. What then to say of Him? In such moods words flow out of Ramdas. He says something about Him. Next moment he contradicts what he says. He is not speaking; words gush out of him. When opposites clash and disappear, what remains is silence. You can speak only about one of the opposites at a time—light or darkness. What can you say of that which is beyond light and darkness? You can conceive of light, conceive of darkness, but not of that which is beyond light and darkness. Even so God can be realized; but cannot be expressed, cannot be defined. It will be futile to describe the indescribable, to express the inexpressible. He is the witness of his silence, he is also the witness of his talk. He is silence; he is talk; and he is beyond silence and talk. Silence cannot describe God. Talk cannot describe Him. There must be neither talk nor silence. He is the all-pervading, all-inclusive, all-transcendent Godhead.

'When I talk, I am dumb. When I walk, I am still. When I work, I am at rest.' The Gita brings us to that point where these opposites meet and lose distinction.

Purusha is static; Prakriti is dynamic—one intensively active, the other completely at rest. The supreme, all-comprehensive Godhead spoken of in the Gita is the Purushottama who is static, dynamic and beyond both. God is at once active and inactive. To describe Him is difficult. One visualizes Him and tries to describe Him. It is all imagination, not reality. We form our own ideas about Him, but He is beyond all ideas. He is beyond all thought, all imagination. Imagination cannot soar up to Him. Mind cannot grasp Him. Words cannot describe Him. Still, we try to set Him forth in words. His glories are infinite. His powers are infinite. He who is beyond conception, beyond expression, has become everything. There is none but He. Therefore, the saint sees himself everywhere; sees God everywhere because God and he are not different. Ramdas cannot speak of Him except in this strain.

Q: 'I' is coming now in Papa's writings.

Ramdas: This 'I' is beyond first, second and third person. It is not the individual 'I'. This 'I' is equated with God. At a big meeting in America, since Ramdas was speaking as usual in the third person, one stood up and asked, "What became of your 'I'?" Another from the same audience said, "His 'I' has become God." Your 'I' should be transformed into the universal 'I'—God.

If there is no question of high and low, there will be equality, peace and goodwill in the world. All will move with one another in perfect friendliness. The consciousness, 'I am greater than you,' is responsible for so much of strife in the world. God dwells equally in the heart of every one of us. If we are all united in God there will be harmony and peace in the world. If we really bear true love for our fellow-beings, based on

the knowledge of the Truth or God, then there will not be competition and exploitation born of the sense of duality.

God stands for harmony and brotherhood. If we really believe in God, we must be friendly with all in the universe. On the other hand, what do we see? In the name of religion we are fighting. God, who must descend into our lives to bring unity, peace and goodwill, has been made the cause of strife. It shows how limited and narrow our idea of God is. We can understand when one fights with another for political or economic reasons, for gaining some material objects. But it is very strange that there should be fight in the field of religion. What is the meaning of these conflicts in the name of God? Why this quarrel over 'your God,' 'my God,' 'his God'? There is no multiplicity of Gods. God is one and we are all His children. If we look upon God as our father and mother and ourselves as His children, we have no reason to war with one another. In households also brothers and sisters fight. Friends also fight. Then which example can we hold out to show that we should love, serve, help and be kind to one another and live in perfect harmony and peace? Divine love, affinity, harmony cannot be compared to anything material. You do not find any similarity between what happens in the spiritual plane and what happens in the physical plane. There is a song by Tulsidas in which he tries to describe the attributes of Sri Rama. Coming to the point of beauty he says, 'To whom shall I compare his face? Sri Rama's face is as handsome as his own.' So God can be compared to Himself alone. In the material sphere there is nothing that can be compared to things in the spiritual kingdom. Everywhere in the

world there is confusion, dissension, competition and selfishness. We cannot live in harmony unless we transcend the lower levels and attain a spiritual life of peace, love and goodwill. Therefore, we have to raise our hearts to God, towards the all-pervading consciousness.

People asked Ramdas in America, 'Why is there so much of strife, misery and dissension in the world?' Ramdas' only reply was, 'The people have forgotten God.' If they really remember God, this state of things would never exist. They are busy making atom bombs. While they are speaking of disarmament they are piling up armaments. God is forgotten. That is why there is so much trouble and unrest. If even one man in a family raises himself to the higher level of consciousness, he will spread about him a peaceful atmosphere and those who come within the aura of his influence will change. If all strive and attain that blessed state, then they will spread everywhere nothing but peace and goodwill. For they will shed their selfishness, their sense of separation from their fellow-beings. They will achieve unity based upon the knowledge of the all-pervading Truth—God. They will have then a heaven upon earth.

Q: Then God's Lila will end.

Ramdas: No. It will be a Lila of happiness, love, goodwill and harmony. When two or more people belonging to different countries meet and talk in love and friendship with each other, what a happy sight it is to watch them! When they quarrel, what an unhappy sight! Here in the Ashram many people come from different places. Though they are strangers they move with each other on equal terms with all love and affection. Is it not a heavenly sight? There is no selfish love there. It is not based upon physical relationship.

It is on the plane of the Spirit. There is no bargaining. Love is given away spontaneously, producing nothing but ecstasy in the heart of everyone. Here when they come they forget their nationality; all prejudices are dissolved. There is no question of class or creed. All sit together and eat. All join together to hear God's name sung. They forget their homes and normal activities. In that happy forgetfulness they move about in perfect bliss and peace.

Q: We therefore feel unwilling to go from here.

Ramdas: You have to go. You are drawn by business and other things at home. Take this atmosphere with you. Learn to lose yourself in the service of others.

When Ramdas went to America, Europe, Japan, Ceylon and other countries, he felt he was moving with people known to him for ages and ages. He did not feel he had gone to strange places or was moving with strange people. He was seeing God in them. He was moving freely with everybody. His Beloved is seated in the hearts of all beings. The world is his home. All these countries are but different rooms in that home. He was moving from room to room and meeting his own Beloved in different forms. If you develop this universal consciousness and see God everywhere and in everybody, then you are the happiest being on earth. That is the source of Ramdas' happiness. He knows no distinction, no sense of 'I, mine and thine'.

'God is my father; God is my mother; all beings are my brothers and sisters and the entire universe is my home.' This is what our Rishis taught us. Now you say, 'This is my country', and call it patriotism. While we have the privilege of calling the whole universe as

our own, we are calling parts of the earth as 'my country' and 'your country'. This is a narrow vision whereas the infinite expansion of heart is what our Rishis expect of us. In the Gita the whole universe is shown as the manifestation of God. God pervades the entire universe and beyond to infinity. Why do you bind yourself to one place when the whole cosmos is yours? So your relation with everybody should be one of spiritual kinship. That is God-vision. Behold God as the entire universe. Your Beloved is everywhere manifest. What a grand conception of God as the universal manifestation! This you will find in the Gita and the Upanishads. That is why God sent Ramdas outside India to various countries and afterwards made him write the book 'World is God'. Some people took exception to this title. Ramdas thought it was the most appropriate one. He actually saw God revealed in everyone he met. He loved everybody and he was loved by everybody in return. In that love he lost himself. He went abroad only to see his Beloved everywhere. He did not go with any sense of superiority to impart the ancient wisdom to the people. His object was to behold God there at close quarters. He found that the people there were none other than expressions of God. One question was put to him in Los Angeles: 'Have you realized God and have you seen Him?' Ramdas replied, 'Yes.' 'What is He like?' asked the questioner. Ramdas said, 'Like yourself. All the forms that he sees are the revelations or manifestations of God.'

God apart from man is no God for him. All the worlds are pervaded by Him. There is no place where He is not. All forms are His forms. Once Ramdas was introduced to the audience in America: 'I have brought

God with me.' Ramdas said, 'God has come to see God.' If you really become God, you see God everywhere. When Swami Rama Tirtha was asked, 'Who are you?' he said, 'I am God, so are you.' God alone can see God. So when a man says that he has seen God, that means he sees everything as God. This is God-vision, God-realization. This is Divya Drishti. If the ego in your heart peeps through the windows of your eyes, you see all as different from yourself. When God sees through your eyes, He sees Himself everywhere just as one sees oneself reflected in the mirror. The illumined soul sees himself everywhere.

16th January, 1961.

Ramdas: It is said in the Gita, 'Let pleasure and pain, honour and dishonour, success and failure, gain and loss, be the same to you; a lump of earth, a stone and gold be the same to you.' How can that be? Ordinarily loss is loss, gain is gain. To what consciousness must you rise in order to see this equality between the pairs of opposites? Many commentators have failed to bring out the full significance of this truth.

The problem before everybody in these days is: 'Which is the ideal we have to follow—the path of Himsa or Ahimsa; the path of activity or inactivity?' The solution is to rise above all these conceptions or these ideals.

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

Here you transcend the distinctions of Himsa and Ahimsa, etc. When you are established in the supreme Reality, you are free. Human beings are caught up in these opposites. When a man wants to walk only on

the path of Dharma, occasions arise, when he has to do sometimes Adharma, because both Dharma and Adharma are based on the changing conceptions of the mind. But the Truth is beyond. You must take your stand on this Truth and then live your life inspired by it, which is your highest Dharma, transcending all pairs of opposites.

What is right and what is wrong? The Gita says that over this even sages are perplexed. When Sri Rama was going to the forest in order to fulfil the vow of his father, many wise men advised him, 'It is not right. Kaikeyi did it out of jealousy. It is not proper for you to leave the kingdom and go.' Sri Rama said, 'No.' He did not accept that standard. He said, 'My father's word must be fulfilled,' and he went to the forest with all cheer and joy.

Q : Is it not egoistic action, Papa? Can it not be interpreted like that?

Ramdas: No. Ruling the kingdom and going to the forest were one and the same thing to him. If he felt like ruling the kingdom and enjoying the luxuries of life, he would have accepted the advice of the wise men contrary to the fulfilment of his father's vow. But he went to the forest all the same. In that sacrifice he experienced joy. He was grateful to Kaikeyi for having become the cause of his going to the forest. Instead of condemning her, he revered her all the more. People told him, 'Your Dharma is to rule the kingdom now. The old father is incapable of ruling.' But he did not listen to them. Truth guided him, and not any worldly consideration.

Q : It is said that he had to go to the forest as a result of Narada's curse.

Ramdas: If he was forced to go against his will, then there would have been some meaning in saying so. Here he felt it a blessing. 'All is for the best'—that is the lesson we have to learn. We have to transcend all Dharmas, all standards. Standards are for worldly people. Surrender to the will of God and rise above all standards set by the human mind—that is the highest Dharma. In society you will find many Dharmas observed and many Adharmas condemned. They are of no significance for saints who have transcended all Dharmas. There are no duties for those who have surrendered to God. The translation of the Sloka in the Gita by Annie Besant is: 'Abandoning all duties come to me alone for shelter'. The word used is 'duties'. The society will say you should not give up your duty. When the question of surrendering yourself to God comes, all duties are meaningless. Certain rules and injunctions are made in order that people may live in peace and harmony. They are made by men for the convenience of the people in society. They are not binding on sages who have realized the Truth. Therefore, their ways are different from those of the world. It does not mean that they are free to do Adharma or bad things. Their actions are neither good nor bad. Their standards are above good and evil.

People try to follow man-made standards. When they cannot follow them they are perturbed. Arjuna knew what Dharma was. That did not give him any consolation when he had to face his elders and others in the battle-field. He felt that if he did not fight, it would be Adharma. But would it be right to kill the elders and his kith and kin? He was perplexed. Sri Krishna said, 'Surrender yourself to me and fight. You

will be a free soul fighting for Lokasangraha—for the welfare of the world.' Thus Sri Krishna took him beyond all standards and made him fight.

K : Complete detachment is necessary.

Ramdas: Inner detachment and outer action. Still within and dynamic without. Action is necessary but should be controlled by the divine power ruling the universe. Your standard is God; not the rules made by man and written down in books for the guidance of ordinary people. God guides you. He is your all in all. Till that state is reached, these rules seek to guide you and yet in certain situations you do not know how to act. Whether you act one way or the other, you feel you are wrong. The right way is to go beyond all rules and be guided by the Divine Spirit within you.

Q : When caught up in the mire of desires, how can they act like that?

Ramdas: When you surrender yourself to God, your ego will die and the desires will disappear. When the tree is cut down, the birds on the tree fly away.

17th January, 1961.

Q : There is a Yogi in Tumkur. He is a worshipper of Divine Mother. He lives in a rented house and cooks his own food. Many people in difficulties go to him and get their problems solved. He is a very simple man and is not after money. Whatever is paid to him voluntarily, he spends in charity. He gets instructions in dreams as to what he should do or should not do. When he hears God's names or glories sung, he soon gets into a trance, loses body-consciousness and after some time comes to normal state. When in trance his whole body is seen shivering and tears flow from his eyes.

Ramdas: Ramdas is in trance when sleeping; he is in trance while sitting; he is in trance while walking; he is in trance at all times. What is the nature of this trance?

Q: I know of a person who goes into trance whenever she hears Bhajan.

Ramdas: Ramdas was getting such a trance. He had a hard time to get over it which would come to him suddenly. He did not want that kind of trance. He wanted a trance that abides at all times and in all conditions. Trance is caused by rising above the physical and mental consciousness. When you are raised to this consciousness, your body is forgotten; but when you return from that state you become conscious of the body. Permanent experience of that consciousness is possible only when the mind ceases to exist and the body is mostly forgotten. Such a person does not live in the plane of the senses. Sense attractions have no meaning for him. Mind is perfectly still. A slight body-consciousness remains for moving about, talking and maintaining the body. He has no desire for the things of the world, no ambition for name, wealth or anything of the kind. He enjoys perennial peace. He does not see any difference that people see in the world. His love flows towards everybody alike. He has no enemy. He is sunk in bliss; an unbroken stream of it will be pouring out of him. This is called Sahaja Samadhi.

Q: This must be beyond trance state.

Ramdas: Beyond or not we cannot say. It is our natural state. We have forgotten it. We have lost it. It is just like the losing of the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve. The original peace and joy is lost. We have to regain the lost paradise. Ignorance is responsible

for our losing that glorious and pure state. That is why we are asked to meditate, pray and surrender to the Divine within us and free ourselves from the clutches of the pairs of opposites, from the bondage of the senses, from lust, greed and wrath. We must be absolutely pure children of God—incarnations of God. Then we will have recovered the 'lost paradise.' We shall then be flooded with peace and joy which we can have at all times because we are established in it. It is not a state that comes and goes. Now we know what we really are.

The sense of duality is responsible for all the mischief in the world—'I and you.' Either it must be all 'you' or all 'I'. In both cases you must lose this individual 'I'—I-ness it is called, or ego-sense; false belief that we are merely bodies; this body is separate; that body is separate. If you want to realize unity, you must discover the all-pervading Truth or Atman. Realization of the Atman is realization of God. Then there is no possibility for you to dislike, to get angry with, to do harm to, or to exploit anybody. You then become the very embodiment of love. Love unites, hate divides. That which unites us into one is God. God is love and that love is the deity of your heart. Reveal it. Manifest it.

There was in Mangalore a Brahmin lawyer. He had great love for Harijans. At that time Gandhiji had not started the movement for the uplift of Harijans. So the lawyer started a school for them. They would be taken in procession through the streets. People would mock at him, fling stones at him. He would not mind. He was carrying on his work selflessly. We were then little children. We found that people were persecuting him. In those days Harijans were called 'depressed classes'. Higher class Hindus used to treat

them with contempt and subject them to indignities. They were untouchables. Nobody cared for them. They would live in hills and jungles. The lawyer used to bring them into the town. All the money he earned he would spend on them. They were in rags. He would give them clothes, teach them how to bathe and keep their bodies clean. He gave them every kind of help to raise their standard of life and make them move with the higher classes with a sense of self-respect. He worked for over thirty years with them. Later on, towards the end of his life he became a Sannyasi. He came to be known as Swami Ishwarananda.

The Swami started in Mangalore a Mahila Sevashram. He brought women out from their seclusion. He opened clubs for them, where they could come and learn many things. He gave them freedom. Now you will find many women in Mangalore taking a leading part in serving orphans. He was the life and soul of that movement.

You see, when love rises in your heart, all distinctions vanish. Love is a solvent which dissolves all diversity. Love knows no nationality, caste or creed. You love all alike. So-called good men and bad men are the same to you. Jesus taught, 'Love your enemies.' Gautama Buddha taught, 'Give love for hate.' It amounts to the same thing. Vedanta says, 'Look upon everybody as yourself.' Your Self and his Self are one. Physically you may appear to be different from each other. In Spirit you are one. Realize this truth. Then there is no room for hate or illwill towards any creature in the world. 'O, Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' Thus spoke Jesus on the Cross. What a heart it is that utters these words! Love

is given to friend and foe alike. A person who has such a heart is like the sandalwood tree. Even if one cuts the tree one gets only perfume from it. No hate, no dislike, no illwill. In such a person God is revealed. As the sun gives light to all alike and does not demand anything in return, so God loves us. If we love all alike without expecting anything in return, we are the embodiments of God. Where God is, there is peace, there is joy, there is freedom. As a Maharashtrian saint has said, 'God dwells in that heart in which there is compassion, forgiveness and peace'. Saints all over the world bear witness to this truth.

'Re' means back. 'Ligare' means to bind. So 'religion' means 'to bind back.' It does not mean rituals or worship. It shows that we who are separated from Him should reunite ourselves with Him. God is love, sweetness, mercy. These are the attributes of God. We must develop these qualities if we want to feel His Presence within us. If we think of Him, meditate on Him, surrender ourselves to Him, then these qualities will develop in us both internally and externally. Only we must draw out these great qualities which are inherent in us. We have built barriers between ourselves and others because of ignorance. Break down the barriers of caste, creed, race and country. Ramdas remembers Edward Markham's poem. Wonderful lines they are! Ramdas is charmed by them:

He drew a circle that shut me out
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout;
But love and I had the wit to win.
We drew a circle and took him in.

How inspiring, how elevating and how true and wise these lines are!

You see how many walls we have erected for keeping ourselves separate from others. Feel one with all beings. Embrace the whole universe as your own. Everybody draws a circle and says, 'Clear out. You do not belong to our circle.' Everybody has an inner circle and an outer circle. In temples they ask, 'Are you a Harijan? Are you a foreigner?' 'Your church and my church; your mosque and my mosque; your temple and my temple' — what is all this prattle? We are believers in one God. God is for all people, all nations, all countries. What divisions we have created among ourselves! 'Mine and his' has broken us into pieces. Instead of peace it is pieces. Peace means harmony, co-operation. But how can we be happy if we are torn up into shreds?

18th January, 1961.

Q : Silence is sometimes very eloquent, Papa.

Ramdas: Silence is Brahman. You realize this when the mind is still. It is not merely silence of the tongue. No good to keep the tongue silent and allow the mind to race like a wild horse. It is mental Mouna that is indicated when we say that Mouna is Brahman.

Q : What is meant by saying, 'Silence is eloquent?'

Ramdas: It is more telling and more powerful than talk. We convey our feeling better by silence than by talk. There is a saying, 'Be still and know that I am God.' Stillness of the mind reveals the glory of God in us. Mind must be silent or still. This is very difficult to attain. There are many who are seemingly meditating. All the limbs are at a standstill without any movement, but the mind is racing. Mind must be stilled through

communion with and meditation on God. God is peace. You get peace when the mind is still. That is what they call seeing God, feeling God, being conscious of God, being aware of His presence. This can be had when the mind-waves have ceased to toss about. So we are asked to concentrate our mind on God through prayer, chanting of His name, reading about Him. By all these methods we can concentrate our mind upon Him. His impersonal aspect cannot be concentrated upon. But we can concentrate upon something that symbolises God.

Our mind cannot be easily fixed on God. It is the nature of the mind to wander. If you love God above everything else, your mind will be always thinking of Him. It is distracted because of your attachment to worldly objects. Thus your mental energies are frittered away. You must think of God, talk about God and serve God. on this way you must be in communion with God, dedicate your life to Him and do all actions as service to Him. You should, as the saying goes, live, move and have your being in God'. God must be the one predominant thought in your mind. Then God within will guide you every moment of your life and you are safe in His keeping; and your life will be supremely blessed. You are asked to follow the path of truth and righteousness. If you want to live such a life, God must be your guide and inspirer. Then you live for the good of all. You are here to fulfil the will of God, carry out His behests for bringing harmony and peace into the world. You are not here for your own sake, but for His sake.

We toil day and night to get things for ourselves. When we come to know that our life's purpose is to serve

Him, we adjust our conduct and movements in consonance with this ideal to fulfil His will. We now become true servants of God and serve Him in all that we do. His will we can know very well when we surrender ourselves to Him. Then our life flows selflessly for the good of all. We do not expect anything in return for our service—either name, fame, wealth, praise or the like. But man generally works for name and fame or something in return. There is an expression in Marathi: करी लाभ वीण प्रीति 'Love without expecting any gain'. In such a life alone there is true joy. Love for love's sake. Our heart flows spontaneously towards those who are suffering. With such a heart we serve; that service is divine. When our heart is filled with compassion, be sure God has manifested Himself in us. Thereafter He guides us at every step and our work will have the highest significance. We then become the real redeemers and benefactors of the world.

It is said, what your right hand gives your left hand should not know. When you are a selfless and humble servant of God, if anybody praises you, you are not elated. You simply reply, 'God did it. Give the credit to Him. I am merely His servant. My hands would not move unless His power activates them'. Some people arrogate to themselves the credit. This is strange in the eyes of the true servant of God. Wherefrom did they get the power to do things? In the body many organs are working involuntarily—digestion is going on, hair is growing, blood is circulating in the veins. Are *they* doing all these things? Some mysterious power is active in them. Is it not the same divine power that is active when they work and serve?

The ego-consciousness is responsible for the confusion

in our life. If we submit to the will of God and know that by His will everything happens, our actions will be saturated with love, forgiveness and mercy. We cannot but give love to everybody, whatever anybody may do to us. This lamp here cannot give darkness. Its nature is to give light. So our nature is to give love to everybody. Through prayer, communion and surrender to the will of God we develop this nature. Then we are full of peace and joy.

If we are proud of any good work we do, it does not help us in going nearer God. Therefore, in the Hindu scriptures it is said that the path of Karma is very difficult. You are puffed up when people praise you, and God is forgotten. Hence, you must remember constantly the greatness, glory and magnificence of God. When you forget Him, the ego rises. Continuous remembrance of God means keeping down the ego. If you surrender to God, you will live from moment to moment and He will guide you. You will not then be calculating and planning for the future. Even if you make plans they must be subject to the divine will. If your plans are fulfilled, God fulfilled them. Plan always for the good of others. In fact, if you make others happy you are really happy. You think if you gain something at the expense of others you can be happy. It is quite the reverse. You are not happy. Buddha said, 'Rejoice in the good fortune of others.' Suppose you try to get something and somebody else gets it, you feel jealous of him and are miserable. If you have true love for others, you must feel happy because they got what you wished to have for yourself.

Sacrifice means giving your all to God and His service. That is dedication, that is surrender. We see

beggars going without a cloth. We will not part with ours. Here in the Ashram if anybody comes wearing a torn saree, Mataji gives her spare saree. She never keeps more than two for herself. If another comes at the same time in a similar condition, she borrows one from somebody else, wears it, and gives away her only saree. Nowadays she gets a number of sarees from friends and she freely distributes them. Many destitute families come to the Ashram. Mataji gives them clothes and takes care of them in other ways. Some poor people have no homes and no friends. They are in the streets. They are taken care of by her with great love. She does it naturally. She does not think that she is doing anything great. She does not want praise from anybody. Her giving these things is usually not known to people. But those who carefully observe things may know. It is done in a spirit of perfect humility, without expecting anything in return. She says, 'It is natural for me to do such things.' God alone can give us that nature. It is not by our efforts we can get it. Our effort is only to cry to Him, to supplicate ourselves before Him. Then He enters into our lives and brings about a transformation in us. Mataji feels the bodies of others are her own. When she is hungry she feeds herself. Similarly, when others are hungry she feeds them. She feels there is nothing wonderful about it. When you act in that spirit, where is the question of seeking praise? When you feed yourself or clothe yourself do you feel that you have done any favour to yourself?

19th January, 1961.

Q : May we know something about free will and how it is related to God's will?

Ramdas: When man is not independent he cannot be said to have any free will. Free will means individual will. When he considers that he is exercising his will it is, in fact, the divine will that is acting through him. So man has no free will. What he thinks is free will is not free will. In everyday life when a man engages himself in some work or the other, he thinks he is so engaged on his own initiative and makes a decision. But sometimes he meets with obstacles. He struggles and finds himself unable to carry it out. There comes a clash between his will and another's will. He is disappointed and suffers. But, if he knows that the will he is exercising is the divine will and takes the opposition also as divine will, that is self-surrender. Here there will be no clash. If he undertook the work at the behest of the divine will and if the Divine frustrated it, he won't be affected thereby. He would say, 'God's will be done,' and keep calm.

Q : If, as you say, everything happens by the will of God, then there is no cause for worry — success or failure.

Ramdas: Opposition comes also from God. So you should submit. Once Ramdas started for a walk with a friend. He told the friend that he was going for a walk by the will of God. He went about ten yards and returned. The friend asked, 'What is the matter?' 'God told him to go back' replied Ramdas. To this the friend said, 'When He told you to go, I did not hear, and when He told you to return I was so near you, but I did not hear'. The friend could not understand this. All the time Ramdas was in divine bliss.

On another occasion Ramdas, along with some friends, started to go to a far-off place. Ramdas had to

board a bus at the stand about half-a-mile distant from the city, but by the time we reached the bus-stand it had left. We had to walk in the street for ten or twelve minutes to reach the bus-stand and Ramdas was going along laughingly. When the bus was missed, Ramdas returned in the same cheerful mood. While returning, the friends were wondering why Ramdas never felt disappointed. He was returning in as jolly a mood as he was while going. Everything happens by God's will and that is a fact. So, if we submit to His will, there will be no disappointment and frustration. How can there be free will for us when God is the inner controller? We are mere puppets in His hands. He holds and pulls the strings.

Q : What about the murderer?

Ramdas: The murderer thinks he is committing the murder. If he knows God's will is working in all that he does, then he will not murder. Murders are committed and the murderer thinks he is doing it. But in fact, it is God who impels him to do it. It is He who brings about the murder.

Q : Is it God's will that the should do so?

Ramdas: It is God's will that the man should be murdered. Why should you worry? If his death is to take place in that manner, who can help it? He gets what is ordained for him. So you take it that it is God's will. The working out of Karma is evident here. The victim must have committed a murder in the past and the reaction comes to him in the same manner. What one sows, one reaps. Sri Krishna throws a new light on this question. He declares in the Gita (Chapter II-19):

“He who takes the Self to be the slayer, he who takes It to be the slain, neither of these knows. It does not slay, nor is It slain.”

Q : If the Karma is done by God’s will, is counter action bound to come?

Ramdas: This is how we look at it. Every action is followed by a reaction. One should have a clear idea of the right attitude to be taken in life and action. One should not get confused and resist evil. One should take everything for the best. He who has got this frame of mind is not affected by the result of his past Karma, because he has submitted to the will of God.

Sri Rama, we may say, had to undergo the trials and difficulties of forest life for fourteen years as a result of his Karma. Suppose we take it that way. If Karma had affected him it would have made his life miserable. When he was wandering through the forests without sleep for days, exposed to all kinds of dangers and privations, he reconciled himself to them and took everything in the best spirit and was always uncomplaining, cheerful and happy. He teaches how we should submit to adverse circumstances without a murmur of complaint or resentment. He took everything that came to him in the right spirit. That is the way we can put up with all unpleasant situations in which we are placed. But we make ourselves miserable because we want things to take place as we wish. In all conditions we should submit to God. Never grumble, never complain, never be sorry. If this is our attitude towards all happenings, we will be free. We cannot but be happy. On the contrary, we want everything to happen in our own particular way. We aim at success, victory, gain, honour, praise and so on. If any reverses come

we are disappointed. Gain or loss, victory or defeat, success or failure, honour or dishonour, praise or censure — all will be the same to us if we take them in the right spirit. This is called equipoise or equilibrium of mind. In the Gita it is called Samatwa or equality.

Had God not brought about a state of abject poverty, beggary and destitution to Ramdas during the early days of his Sadhana, he would not have evolved to the spiritual state attained by him now. He took these privations in the best of lights. He did not grumble and did not accuse anybody. He took it that God had done it for his good. So he was extremely happy throughout his wanderings in the streets, in the plains and in the forests without a resting place, without a single pie in his pocket and living on alms got from door to door. He considered it the best thing for him at that time and he remembered God continuously — without break. So the saying, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so," is true. If we think anything is evil, it is evil for us. If we think anything is good, it is good for us. So we have to take it that everything that happens is for the best as it is the will of Providence. From God no evil can come. God never does any harm. So there is no cause for sorrow or disappointment.

Q : So there is no such thing as free will at all as we think. Not even fifty per cent.

Ramdas: Hundred per cent no free will. There can be no two wills. There is only one will. You think you have a will and initiative of your own. It is utterly wrong. There is no individuality apart from God. If we think *we* are doing actions, we will be entangled.

A devotee who came here, at the time of parting promised he would come again after ten days. Later he wrote a letter stating that owing to circumstances beyond his control he regretted he could not come to the Ashram as promised. Where is his will working? Whose will is it that prevailed? What about his promise? why could he not have used his independent and free will if he had one? You are controlled by the highest power in the world. If that power wills, you will do it; otherwise you cannot.

Sri Ramakrishna was trying as far as possible not to tell a lie. Once he said that he would go to the pine-grove, but later he felt that he had no particular urge to do so. He asked the priest of the Radhakanta temple what was to be done. He said that there was no need to go. Sri Ramakrishna then reasoned to himself, 'Well, everyone is Narayana. So the priest too is Narayana; why should I not listen to him? The elephant is Narayana no doubt, but then the Mahut is Narayana too. Since the Mahut asked me not to go near the elephant, why should I not obey him?'

On another occasion Sri Ramakrishna said to the Mother, 'Good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness I lay at your feet.'

In Bombay some years ago Ramdas was invited by a devotee friend for lunch on his birthday. The friend had invited also about two dozen of his friends so that they might get the benefit of Ramdas' company. On the appointed day another friend, living in Kurla, came all the way to Ramdas and said, 'Papa, I want you to take food with me today.' Ramdas complied with his request. The people at the other place waited and waited for Ramdas. No news was sent to them that

Ramdas was unable to attend. Then they heard that Ramdas had gone to some other place for lunch. They were very much disappointed. Ramdas did not feel anything about it. God made him go to Kurla. Ramdas never felt the responsibility at all, although it was not a thing well done from the point of view of social etiquette. He had broken a promise and created an unpleasant situation for the person who had invited him.

22nd January, 1961.

Q: Sri T.V. S. says that a big burden has been lifted from his head as a result of listening to Papa's talk the other day on 'Divine will and free will.'

Ramdas: He seems to have been fully satisfied and is free from all doubts. See, after that he is not coming here to attend the talks at all!

It is not a matter of believing. It should be experienced. Intellectual acceptance of that principle is not enough. At every moment you must know that the divine will alone is supreme. Whatever happens should be attributed to it. The sense of good and evil will disappear the moment you do so. Your mind will be perfectly at rest. That is what is meant by surrendering ourselves to the divine will. That is the easiest way to transcend the Dwandwas.

Those on the path of Jnana try to identify themselves with Brahman. That process is difficult. To surrender is easier. The moment you do so you rise beyond the Dwandwas. You get established in that supreme consciousness in which the pairs of opposites do not exist. They belong to the Gunas, to the sense of individuality. When you are one with the universal Reality, they have

no meaning for you. In all conditions you remain free and happy. The weaver's story in the Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna is an example in point. By submitting to the will of God, he was perfectly at peace in all circumstances. That is true surrender. You are upset if anything goes wrong from your individual, narrow standpoint. You have to cultivate the universal standpoint. Then anything that happens, which you considered at one time to be wrong, will not disturb you. There will be no conflict in your mind.

The message of the Gita is to go beyond the Dwandwas and Gunas:

समदुःखः सुखः स्वस्थः समलोष्टाश्मकाश्चनः ।
 तुल्यप्रियः प्रीयो धीरस्तुल्यनिन्दात्मसंस्तुतिः ॥
 मानापमानयोस्तुल्यस्तुल्यो मित्रारिपक्षयोः ।
 सर्वारम्भपरित्यागी गुणातीतः स उच्यते ॥

'He to whom pain and pleasure are alike, who dwells in the Self, to whom a lump of earth, a stone and gold are alike, to whom the dear and the undear are alike, who is a man of wisdom, to whom censure and praise are the same; he who is the same in honour and disgrace, and the same towards friends and enemies, who has given up all initiative for action — such a man is said to have transcended the Gunas.'

This is possible only by surrendering yourself totally to God's will. All other Dharmas are of secondary importance. Thus transcend the Gunas and Dwandwas. That is what is called Brahmi Sthiti, universal consciousness. In that state the mind ceases to exist. Mind is

the veil between you and God, and when the veil is removed you realize that you are He.

Westerners speak of Brahman or Atman; but when they hear this idea of going beyond the Dwandwas, they are puzzled. They cannot understand. They are worshippers of the personal aspect of Godhead more than the impersonal. The Personal they can grasp by the mind. The Impersonal they cannot conceive of. When Ramdas was in Kasaragod Ashram, Mark Sanjiva Rao, a Hindu convert to Christianity, used to visit him often. Once he came when Ramdas was reading 'Vivek Chudamani' of Sankara. When he heard two or three Slokas from the book, he said, 'I do not want to hear this,' and closed his ears with his fingers. Ramdas said, 'You must hear it.' and pulled out his fingers from his ears. 'I cannot bear to hear this philosophy', he said. 'To rise beyond birth and death and enter into that realm of the Infinite without name and form! Oh, I cannot hear anything about it.' This shows that he was the votary only of the personal God.

The Gita speaks of the Impersonal more than the Personal. The Personal leads you to the Impersonal through motiveless or disinterested action. Jnana is beyond the Gunas. Universal vision also is Nirguna Darshan of the Divine who is all-pervading, dwelling in all beings and creatures in the universe. That is Viswarupa Darshan referred to in the XI Chapter of the Gita. That Darshan comes after Jnana. Sankara's view is that we must turn our mind from the world, taking it as illusion, and merge in the all-pervading Consciousness and attain Jnana. Thereafter the Jnani looks upon the universe as Brahman.

Those who approach God through the path of Bhakti do not look upon the world as illusion, but as the Lila of God. Everything is 'Vasudeva'. This is the realization. Here Jnana and Bhakti go together, not Bhakti of the lower type, but Para Bhakti. This is beautifully explained by Swami Vivekananda in his book on Bhakti Yoga.

When the ego ceases to exist, then it is you get the universal vision. Your activities will then be inspired by the supreme Godhead and done spontaneously for the welfare of the world. When you have reached this exalted state you cannot be selfish and narrow-visioned. In the fire of Jnana all your Vasanas are destroyed. What exists then is only Brahman. Even the idea of Loksangraha seems to be limiting your action to a motive or a goal. Loksangraha is there only from the view of the world. You are not even conscious that you are doing good to anybody. The example of the sun is appropriate. If you ask the sun, 'Are you giving light to the world in order to make all people happy?' The sun would reply if it could, 'No, it is my nature to give light.' That is the position of the Jnani-Bhakta. Every action, small or big, will prove to be conducive to the welfare of others. So long as you are in the clutches of the ego, you are selfish, and real good cannot be done by you. You may pretend that you are doing so. Real good flows out of you when you have surrendered yourself to God. It is divine Shakti that now inspires you to perform all actions.

Manifestation itself is Shakti. The same Shakti creates, preserves and destroys. Shiva and Shakti are one. What appears motionless is also moving. Unless there is movement there cannot be any form or

appearance. It is not possible for our naked eyes to see the vibrations which make the objects visible. The particular grouping of vibrations, according to their subtle rhythm and densities, makes the objects appear in different forms and shapes. They have all emanated from one cosmic power — Shakti. That power is both visible and invisible, and in its pristine and inherent nature is indestructible though apparently kaleidoscopic and mutable.

The objects gradually disintegrate and disappear. But the power that causes their appearance and disappearance is eternal. It is called Para Prakriti — universal Shakti or Mother. The moment you realize the truth that it is this universal Mother — dynamic force — who reveals Herself as the universe and causes all its movements, your ego will automatically vanish. Then you will be one with the integral Divine — at once one with Shakti and Shiva, the support of Shakti.

So you come to the conclusion that there is nothing but God. Everything, seen as well as unseen, is God. When you say that He is at once this and that, the mind is puzzled — you cannot grasp how two contrary facts relate to the same Truth. God is at once both active and inactive. This is the principle underlying the teaching of the Gita. Sri Krishna says to Arjuna, 'I will teach you a Yoga by which you can fight and at the same time know that you do not fight. Instead of going to the forest renouncing the battle, if you fight with this vision and realization, it will be conducive to the welfare of the world. You are established in the inner peace of the Eternal on the one hand and active in the field of Nature on the other. While you destroy evil by your action you remain unaffected by it.'

This is what the Gita teaches : 'Action in inaction and inaction in action.' You are doer and non-doer at once. Here actions do not bind you and they leave no stain on you. You can put this truth into practice in your daily life. You will be like the lotus leaf in water. It is in water, yet is untouched by it. To attain this state you must rise above the pairs of opposites. Yours is to do, but not to be concerned about the result. This is Karma Yoga — action done in a state of Yoga. Now you are an instrument of the Divine Power. You are above like and dislike. Truly, you are acting in a spirit of spontaneity.

Egoistic action is the cause of man's bondage. When he feels he is an instrument of the Divine Power, he is free from bondage. He is a liberated soul. Vasanas must die, ego-sense must disappear. Vasanas can go only through Nishkama Karma and practice of concentration. These are the Sadhanas for the purification of the mind without which you cannot realize God. In the Gita it is said you must be free from the clutches of lust, greed and wrath. But, as Sri Ramakrishna puts it, the desire for Kamini and Kanchana must go. The desire for these is very difficult to conquer, for attraction for them leads you astray and you feel helpless. Primarily you want grace in order to get the necessary strength to conquer these Vasanas. Usually a man's mind is obsessed by these two desires. If you aspire to rise to the divine consciousness you have to free yourself from their hold. Of course, by God's grace it is possible to overcome them and then, transcending the Gunas, you come to realize that you are not the body or a bundle of desires, but the eternal Atman.

You have a body, but you are not the body. Your real nature is divine—you are the immortal, changeless

Atman. If you live in that consciousness, you will always be in Sat-Chit-Ananda—eternal existence, consciousness and bliss. The world is too much with you because the body is too much with you. You identify yourself with the body. When anything happens to the body you say it happens to you—so much is the identification with the body. You declare: 'I am born, I am growing, I am dying'. Detach this 'I' from the body and identify it with the immortal Atman and see how blissful and free you become. Identification with the body gives rise to like and dislike, love and hatred, resulting in misery, pain and anxiety. All these are changing and momentary. You are caught in this vicious circle. This is all your own creation, a trick of your mind. There is no such thing as good and evil. If you rise beyond the mental plane to the spiritual, you will find that you suffered all along through ignorance and for nothing at all. You had forgotten your real Self. Therefore know that you are the immortal Self and not this changing, perishable body. Be aware of your real Self by continuous concentration and meditation on any sound, form, name or light as a symbol of the Self. Just as you use ladders to get to the top floor, so these are like ladders to take you to the absolute Self. This is the Upasana or Sadhana by which you attain the eternal, changeless Self.

20th January, 1961.

Ramdas: There is a yearning for peace in the hearts of all people. Without peace life is not worth living.

Q: It is the most difficult thing to get.

Ramdas: Life is intended for attaining peace. Otherwise, what is the purpose of life? There are potentialities in us, which, if properly harnessed, will work wonders. We can bring sunshine where there is darkness, joy where there is misery, love where there is hate. We can transform the people who come into contact with us.

Our object is to give happiness to others. By giving happiness our happiness increases. This secret very few people know. In spite of fabulous wealth and all other worldly comforts, happiness eludes our grasp. We cannot get it. The most unselfish man is the most happy man. Selfishness can go when the ego-sense disappears. Where there is selfishness there is nothing but misery. How to get peace? For that we knock about in various ways and do not get it. We may learn from saints the secret of peace. But peace must be won by oneself; and that peace is within.

Q : Then, is there nothing like grace?

Ramdas: Grace is there always, but you are not aware of it. You must try hard until you become aware of it. You have closed the windows of your room and you are complaining of darkness. If you open the windows you will get light. It is there for you all the day.

Q : Sometimes in the darkness we do not know even how to open the window.

Ramdas: If you grope for the window you can get it. If you simply sit idle, it is no good. You must try. You may by mistake touch the wall where there is no window. Grope about, find out the window and push it open. At once a flood of light will come to you.

Q : What do you say about litigation?

Ramdas: If you want to be miserable, you may engage yourself in litigation. You will then have plenty of trouble. Civil suits are often handed down from father to son and become a legacy for generations, and finally when the court gives a decree, there is nothing left of his money but instead a large debt incurred on litigation, which cannot be paid off even by selling his property.

Q: A certain person conducted a big civil suit for a number of years; ultimately he won in the Privy Council, but died soon after.

Ramdas: We advised a person not to go to the court. But his reply was, 'If I get the money, I will give it for charitable purposes. Why do you say that I should not sue?' We said, 'It is not so easy as that.' He is now having a crop of troubles.

Q: Does D. not come here?

Ramdas: When worried he comes here and is peaceful. When he goes back he puts his head again into the hornets' nest.

Q: It is like the fight between the serpent and the mongoose.

Ramdas: In the world there is nothing but worry, worry, worry. But when you worry for others — 'others' means not friends and relatives alone—you play the part of God. When you yourself have difficulties and you throw the burden upon God, then you play the part of a devotee. God is compassionate and merciful. He wants us to be peaceful. He ever leads us on the right path. His heart is tender. You can leave everything to Him.

Q : Does He not create problems?

Ramdas: He is creating problems for Himself. God and devotee are one. He looks after you in a mysterious way. Which part do you want to play? You must play both the parts. When you throw your burden on Him, you play the devotee's part, and when you relieve the sufferings of others you play the part of God. The heart that melts at the sight of suffering is not your heart, it is God's heart.

27th January, 1961.

Q : K. has written to say he has been trying to visit Kollur temple for the last four years and he has not yet succeeded. In the same way, he has long been trying to come to the Ashram but to no effect. Something or other demands his attention and he is unable to snatch himself away from his work. He requests Papa to see that his desire is fulfilled.

Ramdas: He wants Ramdas to go there, take him on the shoulders and bring him to the Ashram! When he was poor he had no difficulty to come. Now he has become rich, *there* is the trouble.

Nishkama Bhakti is a very rare thing in the world. And a Nishkama Bhakta is looked after by God in a mysterious way. Even if he does not want anything from God or from anybody, help comes to him. Tukaram was a very poor man. He earned his livelihood by selling oil. He lost everything because he was generous to a fault. He had nothing at home. Neighbours and others would feel compassion for him, his wife and children. They would provide food and provisions for the family from time to time. They were carrying on

in this way. Shivaji who was a great lover of saints, once happened to be in the vicinity of Dehu, the place where Tukaram lived. He came to know that Tukaram and his family were living in great poverty. So he called his minister and directed him to provide the family with all things. The minister at once made arrangements and brought to the family a big bundle consisting of costly clothes and rich ornaments, and also provisions. Tukaram was absent; he was singing God's name in the temple. His wife was given all these things. She and children soon dressed themselves in rich clothes, wore the fine gold ornaments set with diamonds and looked attractive and beautiful. When they were thus enjoying themselves, Tukaram came home. He was shocked. 'O God, wherefrom have these things come? A misfortune has visited us!' He enquired and was told by his wife that Shivaji had sent them. He cried, 'No. No. We shall be ruined. Take out all these things. Put on your old clothes.' He accordingly collected the clothes, ornaments, etc., made a bundle of them and put it on his shoulders. He went straight to Shivaji, placed the bundle before him and said, 'If we are caught up in these things, we will forget God.' He then came away.

This is an example of Nishkama Bhakti. Even if God gives you wealth you reject it. You want to remain poor. You are satisfied with His name. You can enjoy supreme bliss with the Name. What is the use of these things—costly ornaments, clothes, money, etc.? You will only be tempting thieves and also earn the envy of many. Besides, you will become proud and cease to think of God. How much harm will be done to you! So you refuse to have them.

Satan offered a kingdom to Jesus. Do you know what he said? 'Get thee behind me.' He prayed, 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.' Mara tempted Buddha. He did not yield to temptation. Siddhis bring you money, powers, honour, etc., but you have to withstand temptation. If you fall a prey to it, you are lost. There is no hope of spiritual progress.

Purandharadas, after he left home, was going to a temple at Vijayanagar. He had renounced everything that he possessed. He had nothing with him. On the way he noticed that his wife was hiding something. When asked, she said, 'I have got a silver vessel.' He took the vessel from her and threw it into a well nearby. She was also a great soul. She had taken the vessel for the use of her husband, not for herself. They proceeded on the journey. He was going ahead of his wife. He saw on the road a diamond that had been dropped by somebody. He feared that his wife might be tempted to pick it up, and so covered it with some soft earth by his toe. She came forward and asked him, 'What is it that you were hiding?'.. He replied, 'There was a diamond there. I hid it so that you might not pick it up.' She said, 'You still see difference between a stone and a diamond. Your renunciation is not complete. You are still unripe.' She thus taught him a good lesson. On account of her, he got true devotion to God. The spirit of Vairagya came to him through his wife. He was at one time a most miserly man.

Tukaram and Rameswar Bhat were contemporaries. They lived as neighbours. Rameswar Bhat had a philosophers' stone (Parasmani). Everyday he would get some iron turned into gold by the touch of the stone. He was thus leading a very comfortable life. Tukaram's

wife came to know of this. So she went to Rameswar Bhat's house when he was away, and asked his wife to show her the Parasmani. On examining it she said, 'This is but a simple stone.' 'No,' the other lady replied, 'if it touches iron, the latter turns into gold.' Tukaram's wife was surprised and said, 'Please lend it to me for a day. I will also convert some iron into gold. We are starving at home. My husband is always in the temple, singing God's name.' She was given the philosophers' stone and she took it home. In a few minutes Tukaram came. 'What is this you have got?' he asked. She replied, 'This is philosophers' stone. I borrowed it from Rameswar Bhat's wife for a day.' Tukaram took it from her, went out and threw it into the Chandrabhaga river. Tukaram's wife was distressed and asked, 'What shall I say to that woman who lent it to me?' When the philosophers' stone was not returned as promised, the woman came, and when told that it had been thrown into the river, she asked, 'How can I face my husband? He will surely kill me.' Then Tukaram's wife told her husband, 'What is this you have done? You have put me into great trouble. When her husband comes home he will ask her, and what can she reply? He will flog her to death.' At this, Tukaram led the neighbour's wife to the riverside. He then took a handful of pebbles from the bed of the river and asked her to take one pebble. Lo! all the pebbles in his hand had turned into philosophers' stones. She took one out of them and the rest he threw back into the river. By the touch of the saint, pebbles became philosophers' stones. Still Tukaram and his family were starving at home owing to poverty. When wealth comes to the door, the Nishkama Bhaktas reject it. Ramdas has seen many who are wealthy. They are utterly forgetful of God.

Q : Rameswar Bhat who was using the philosophers' stone only once a day, was a wise man, indeed.

Ramdas: As he was rich, he became proud and arrogant. He was giving a lot of trouble to Tukaram. He treated him with utter contempt. Tukaram bore everything calmly.

Q : Diogenes was supposed to have renounced everything. He had nothing of his own except a cup to be used while drinking. One day while going through the streets he saw a little boy drinking water from his open palms. He at once threw even that cup away. Such was his renunciation.

Ramdas: For several months Ramdas was without a vessel when he was going from place to place. In the first year he had a small aluminium Lota which cost him six annas. In that he sometimes boiled rice for his food. Later on, as he travelled, he found it an encumbrance. Books also he gave up. He had only one cloth. Whenever he went to a house for Bhiksha, he would be given some Roti with Chutni. He would take it in his hand, sit in the courtyard outside the house and eat it. After his meal he would drink water in his 'cupped' hands and walk away.

At Chitrakut, Ramdas found a Sadhu standing on the terrace of a house and calling him. Ramdas went up to him. The Sadhu was naked. He was observing silence. He looked at Ramdas and said by signs, 'What is this, you have no vessel? You must have one.' He had one small water vessel made of gourd, which he forced Ramdas to take. As it was given by the Sadhu, he used it for a day. The next day he gave it away. Ramdas was for months without any water pot.

Sadhus, who were keeping him company in the wandering life, used to have two or three vessels with them for cooking and for carrying water; and they used to have on their back a bundle containing blankets, deer-skin, some extra cloth, etc. As Ramdas had nothing with him except one cloth that covered his body, the Sadhus had great respect for him. When they were cooking for themselves, they would get the provisions and do the cooking together. Some would bring water, some firewood and so on. But, if Ramdas would offer to join them, they would object, saying, 'No. No. You sit down there and take Ramnam.' They would take a deer-skin, spread it on the ground and tell him, 'Sit here; do not bother.' When the food was ready, they would take a leaf, spread it before him and serve Roti and dal on it. And when going to sleep in the night they would take out a Kambal, spread it and ask him to sleep on it. The next morning he would get up and walk away. He never asked them to do anything for him. He could sleep on bare ground. He never felt any discomfort. He became used to that kind of life.

When Ramdas was staying in a rest-house at Kasaragod, friends in that place provided him with all things—Lota, deerskin, mats, country-umbrella, lantern and some books to read. One night Ram came in a strange form and took away everything. He had only one Kaupin left. Next morning people came to see him. With that one Kaupin on he was sitting on the floor. 'Who robbed you of your things?' they asked. 'Ram came and Ramdas gave them to Him,' replied Ramdas. In no time all things were replaced anew as if nothing had been taken away. Ram takes away and Ram provides.

There is so much joy in giving. When you give with joy, the giver is blessed and the receiver is blessed. It is not the joy born of the feeling that you are sacrificing. Giving itself yields pure ecstasy. The things pass from your hands into the hands of others. Even the consciousness of giving is not there.

Look upon the person to whom you give, as God. If you think you are giving to some person who is inferior to you, the value of the gift is gone! You will not derive real benefit from such giving. 'I am giving; I am doing him service; I am helping him;' such thoughts cannot give peace, but will tend only to increase your pride. God is joy and peace. When God reveals Himself in your heart, you do things spontaneously.

28th January, 1961.

Q : Ramdas' example is the only one, I know, in which a vision spoke to him but he could not understand. If saints refer to a vision, they understand always.

Ramdas: When Ramdas had the vision of Buddha he never talked. So also Sri Krishna never talked. In Christ's vision he spoke something, but it was not intelligible. For he spoke in a language which Ramdas could not understand. Ramdas did not mind it. He was satisfied with the vision. The vision left a deep impression on him. Later he lost body-consciousness and remained in a state of ecstasy for hours.

Q : Would Papa tell me about the vision of Buddha?

Ramdas: Ramdas saw only his face. A serene face in a state of deep meditation. There was a halo all round his head.

Q : On what occasion did Papa get it?

Ramdas: That was in Kadri cave, Mangalore. He does not remember whether it was night or day time, perhaps it was night. He was sitting up. He was awake, but his eyes were closed. The vision was seen with the eye of the mind. He had forgotten his body. Mind was not functioning at that time. In certain states of meditation the mind is active, thinking of the attributes, greatness, or the image of God. There was no such thing at the time when he saw Buddha.

K : How did you know it was Buddha?

Ramdas: The features clearly showed it was Buddha. Ramdas had seen his statues in some places. There was a clear resemblance. He could feel it was Buddha. So also he could feel it was Christ in the other case. In Geneva somebody asked Ramdas, 'How did you know it was Christ?' He had seen so many pictures. But one did not tally with the other. His brilliant face with beard was like that one you see in the picture on the wall here. Wonderful figure! When Ramdas thinks of it, it appears before him. It is so vivid.

Ramdas had the vision of Sri Krishna in the house he lived, while he was chanting Ramnam. He saw the full figure of Sri Krishna dancing, flute in hand. That was the first vision he saw. He had these three visions because he was guided spiritually by the Gita, the Light of Asia and the New Testament. He did not pray for these visions, but they came to him unsought. And, after they had disappeared, he never craved for them again. He was not after these visions at all. He wanted to see the universe as the manifestation of God. Step by step one has to rise up to that realization where

every form, every object is seen as the expression of God, form of God. That experience can alone give one the fullest freedom from bondage of ignorance or 'I-ness'. A divine form appears only to disappear and to leave one in darkness. In Ramdas' case he now feels God's presence all the twentyfour hours of the day. He lives, moves and has his being in God.

Q : Since Papa is living constantly in this blissful state, Papa will have no dreams at all, I hope.

Ramdas: He is dreaming of happiness only.

Q : No forms?

Ramdas: Forms do come. Now also Ramdas is seeing forms. He enjoys seeing forms in dreams also. Nothing extraordinary about it. Ramdas is externally living a normal life. Only his inner vision has changed.

Q : So long as the mind is working, they must be there.

Ramdas: He searched for the mind and could not find it.

Q : Then what causes dreams?

Ramdas: Ram is the cause. Everything can be explained in terms of Ram. The question came about his horoscope some days ago. In conclusion he said, "Ramdas' horoscope is RAM."

Q : N. had taken Papa's horoscope to an astrologer. I do not know what the astrologer predicted.

Ramdas: Is there a past and is there a future?

Q : For the sake of Lila.

Ramdas: Beyond Lila there is a state of existence in which there is no form or movement. Lila denotes

movement, play. Play is activity. But you can see this as Lila only when you have the experience of the all-pervading, changeless, nameless, formless, eternal Purusha. Then only you can look upon the world as Lila. Otherwise you are only saying so. Saying will not do. You must be a perfect witness, detached, unaffected, beyond name and form. Then you can see the world as Lila.

Q : Are we not simply acting on the stage?

Ramdas: After Self-realization you will be acting as well as witnessing. Even when you are acting, witness-consciousness remains.

Q : An actor knows he is acting.

Ramdas: There are many actors who identify themselves so much with their roles that they forget they are acting. They are engrossed in the play. That is what is happening in the world. You must shake yourself up. You must be conscious of your real nature. For witnessing the Lila you must get established in the static, all-pervading Reality. Now you know that you are controlled by the universal Shakti. You as Atman are not doing anything. The same power which makes the sun shine, the breeze blow, the flower blossom, the trees grow, is making you also do everything. If you are conscious of this, then you are free.

Really the ego does not exist. It is illusion which makes you think that the ego is there. In fact, the non-existent ego is giving so much trouble.

Q : Because it is not existent, it is difficult to drive it away.

Ramdas: How can you drive away something which does not exist? When knowledge comes you

understand it never existed. When you stumble against a rope in the darkness you think there is a snake. When you bring the light you find that it is only a rope. So the snake never was except in your imagination. Such an illusion makes us think that we, as individuals, exist. Individuality is false. God alone is. God is omnipresent, infinite and eternal.

When you go to Ramana Maharshi to ask a question, he would say, 'First find out who you are that puts the question.' You analyse your self; you search for the source of the 'I'. It is like peeling out the layers of the onion to get at the seed and finally discovering that there is no seed at all. Through this process of self-enquiry you know that the supreme Self alone exists and the ego is false.

You go in search of God thinking you are different from Him. At the end of your quest you find you are He. The seeker never existed. It is only a play, in a state of illusion, that you are going in search of Him thinking you are someone distinct from Him. There never was a separation between you and Him. You think you are separate only through illusion. When you find Him you know you are already He, you were always He. You did not know it. Now you have come to know it. This is Jnana.

Jnana dispels darkness and makes you see things as they are. A person suffering from jaundice sees everything yellow. When he is cured of the disease, he sees all things as they are. With the eye of knowledge you see one Atman pervading everywhere. Gold ornaments are in various forms, but they are all made of the same gold. So every object you see is the manifestation of the Divine. The manifestation itself is divine. In the Gita,

Sri Krishna says, 'Like the thread in the rosary of beads, so I am dwelling in all beings.' When 108 beads are strung on a thread and the two ends of the thread are joined, you call it a rosary. 108 beads are made into one rosary by that thread. Here beads may be of glass, and strung on cotton thread, or silver wire. They are two different substances. But Jnaneshwar has improved upon this simile. He says gold beads are strung on a gold wire. Gold inside and gold outside. Thus the unmanifest and the manifest are both one. So consciousness of this one all-pervading Reality makes you see unity in the world. One in many. So world is God. You come to that realization.

Q : Liberated souls pass away and they do not take birth again. For the good of mankind, can they not take birth if they will?

Ramdas: What is liberation? After liberation, does the soul exist as an entity? Individual is the soul or Jiva. You have a sense of individuality. An American writer treats of three types of consciousness in his book—simple consciousness, consciousness and super-consciousness. The simple consciousness you will find in animals. They have not developed a distinct individuality. They are guided by instinct. The second type of consciousness is seen in man. Man is a reasoning animal. He has developed a consciousness of individuality which makes him feel he is separate from others. The third is super-consciousness which transcends individuality. This is the same as universal consciousness. 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'—this is possible only after attaining super-consciousness. Previously you thought you were the body and so different from others. Some people you liked, some you hated—

some you called 'mine' and some you called 'not mine'. Thereby a conflict ensued which gave rise to sorrow, fear, etc.

Q: Is soul this individual consciousness?

Ramdas: Yes; if 'soul' is taken as the synonym of Jiva. 'Soul' is an English word. Jiva is a very comprehensive term. The Christian theologians do not accept fusion of the individual with the cosmic soul and they do not believe in the transmigration of souls. The Jiva casts off ignorance and reveals itself as God. Jiva minus Maya is God. 'Man is indeed God playing the fool.' So long as ignorance remains he is a man. Ignorance consists in thinking that one is separate from another. When we know that we are the universal Spirit, we are free from Maya. In this freedom we realize we are one with God. According to Vedanta we are essentially divine. But we are oblivious of this fact. Forgetfulness can go by remembrance. Ignorance can go by knowledge.

Q: What is the source of that ignorance? Is it intellect?

Ramdas: Mind, senses, outer perceptions — all these create ignorance in us. Why? Nobody can know. But it is there, to be taken only as Lila. Truly, God alone is. Any conception other than this is born of ignorance, delusion or pretension. If a person is playing the part of Akbar the King, and you ask him on the stage, 'Who are you?' he will reply, 'King Akbar.' He will not reveal his identity. If you go to the green-room and ask him, he will not say, 'I am Akbar.' So you pretend that you are somebody other than God. All the same you are He. There was an insane old lady

in a mental hospital. Some people would go to see her. Whenever they went near her, she would say, 'I am Queen Victoria.' She was thinking she was Queen Victoria. So you may play some part under illusion or hallucination and your real nature is hidden.

Q : Those great souls who have realized God do not take birth again, I hope. I am coming to my original question.

Ramdas: After having realized God and shed the individuality or 'I-ness', who is there to make a Sankalpa to take another birth?

Q : But they do not at once drop off their bodies. They live and act like individuals. They even plan for the next day or year.

Ramdas: Who makes the plans? God makes the plans. It is just like a wooden doll made to dance. In the same way the body is living and acting. They see it only that way. Why? 'Because He makes me do so. It is not I who make plans; it is all God's plan. I will not be reborn through unfulfilled desires. If I come again, I will do so only when I am commissioned by God.'

Q : What about Avatars?

Ramdas: Avatar is God's direct descent: a special descent.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

'Whenever, O descendent of Bharata, there is decline of Dharma and rise of Adharma, then I incarnate Myself.'

He comes in response to the cry of human beings in distress. Swami Vivekananda was inspired to say that he would be born a million times to relieve people of their misery.

The seed of misery and sorrow is within us. That seed is ignorance. It must be burnt up by the fire of knowledge — knowledge of our divinity.

29th January, 1961.

Ramdas: On Mataji's return from Bombay, Ramdas asked her, 'What is the news?' She said, 'I have Rs. 250. I paid certain amounts to persons in need, from the love offerings I received there. I do not remember the details.' Ramdas came to know from N. that she had received amounts totalling over Rs. 8000, which she distributed to the needy, poor devotees during her one month's stay in Bombay. Thousands are nothing to her — just a trifle.

Q: She must be made Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

Ramdas: Reserve Bank will go to pieces. Even if Kubera, the god of wealth, were to be Mataji's treasurer, he would become bankrupt in no time. He would have to go a-begging with a cocoanut shell in his hand as a beggar's bowl. That would be the fate of Kubera — poor fellow!

Q: Mataji will not like this sort of joke.

Ramdas: Ramdas told her about it. She merely laughed. Money given to Mataji is like a bit of stone swallowed by a hen, which is digested immediately. As soon as she receives money it is given away.

Q : Mataji did not incur any debt!

Ramdas: That is the redeeming feature. Ramdas considers himself lucky to have got Rs. 250. When she was leaving for Bombay, Ramdas asked her how much money she might require for herself, as her expenses were all met by N. 'It is enough if you give Rs. 25,' she said. Ramdas gave her Rs. 75 in five-rupee notes. 'All right,' she said. At once she went out and gave five rupee each to those whom she saw, as if she was distributing Pappad. Whoever was in front of her got Rs. 5. At the Kanhangad railway station five or six porters were there. She had no money. N. gave her twentyfive rupees which she at once gave away. By that time the train arrived. Otherwise the station staff also would have got a five-rupee note each. If Ramdas had been present there, he too would have got one five-rupee note! Whatever is received is for giving away. That should be our motto. Nothing belongs to us.

Q : It is a Charitable Trust.

Ramdas: That too in her hands! It is a 'Two-minute' Trust or 'One-minute Trust. She will never keep money for the morrow. She will distribute it then and there. It is charity running riot. When the money comes into Ramdas' hands, she finds it a little difficult to worm it out and do as she likes. When she is in a mood to give, she cannot control herself. Then Ramdas controls her.

Without Ramdas' knowledge she freely distributes cloth to the poor. At the end of the month the bill comes to a huge figure and Ramdas quietly pays it.

Q : As the Weavers' Society members are working on handlooms, their production is limited, and Mataji cannot purchase cloth as she likes.

Ramdas: If not available there, she gets it from the market. They readily supply whatever she orders. On seeing the bill Ramdas is sometimes stunned. But Mataji merrily cuts and tears the cloth for distribution. The sound of tearing cloth is very sweet to her.

Q : Three years ago when I came here, some Sadhu died.

Ramdas: Yes. Mataji attends the cremation also. She is in the cremation ground until the body is perfectly burnt out. Some people come here deliberately to die. They have no other object in coming here. They are very ill. They do not go. 'Where am I to go? I have seen enough of the world. This is the fittest place for me to die,' they say. About a hundred persons might have been cremated here during these thirty years. Mataji looks after the sick with great love. She would arrange for their proper treatment, nursing, bath, food, clothing and everything. She would sometimes send them to Mangalore hospital with a letter from here. After ten or fifteen days in the hospital the patients would return, being slightly better. These are wandering Sadhus. They have no homes and no money.

Q : People go to Kashi to die. This Ashram also is like Kashi.

Ramdas: This is Kashi, Rameshwar, Vrindavan and Vaikunta. For those who come to die, this is Kashi. For those who come for peace, this is Vaikunta.

Q : Is there any restriction regarding the stay of Sadhus in the Ashram?

Ramdas: Generally they can stay for three days. If they do not go in three days they are reminded of this restriction. If they are ill, they stay until they recover.

1st February, 1961.

Q : Suppose a householder enters the order of Sannyas and afterwards repents for his action, what should he do?

Ramdas: He must return to the householder's life and do some work to earn his livelihood. Of course, this requires some courage.

Q : Is that the only remedy?

Ramdas: What else can he do? If he has intense aspiration to realize God, there is no question of repentance. He will not feel the rigour of Sannyas life at all. Here the mind of this person is still after worldly comforts. To conquer worldly desires is no joke.

Even if he returns to the householder's life, he will have to bear the brunt of criticism. The wife and others members of the family will make fun of him and will have scant respect for him. The public will taunt him, insult him and treat him with contempt. Thus, to continue as a Sannyasi is hard, whereas to return home is a disgrace. But he may try to get away to some unknown place, take up some job there and live with his family. The people of that place, being strangers, will not harass him.

Q : Is fasting a necessity?

Ramdas: That depends upon individual need. Conditions and temperaments differ. When you feel the need, you may fast. There is no use of taking

anybody's advice in this matter. Each one should decide for oneself. Otherwise, if you fast in accordance with another's opinion or the injunction of the Shastras, hunger will torment you and your mind will get disturbed. Your attention will be on food. If you do not feel the need, do not fast. There is no rule that everybody should fast.

6th February, 1961.

Ramdas: You do Bhajan, read scriptures and repeat Ramnam at prescribed times, but when you begin your daily work you allow the mind to wander. That will not do. Constant remembrance of God is necessary. Sri Krishna says:

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

'O Arjuna, undoubtedly the mind is hard to control as it is of wavering nature. It can be steadied by practice and dispassion.'

You should have dispassion towards objects of the senses and also constant practice in the repetition of Ramnam. Otherwise the mind will be tossed about by desires. Continuous remembrance of God is possible only when your devotion is intense.

Sankara says:

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।

निर्मोहत्वे निश्चलतत्वं निश्चलतत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

'Contact of saints gives detachment, which in turn brings freedom from delusion. Freedom from delusion results in perfect stillness of mind by which Mukti or liberation-in-life is attained.'

A wandering mind cannot see God. It must become still. The way to this is Satsang.

Some Sadhus dwelling in Kutis or Ashrams in Rishikesh lead a hard life for several years. They say, 'I have lived in the Himalayas for twenty years and more and undergone severe austerities, but still I have achieved nothing!' What kind of life do they lead there? They take unwholesome food which they receive from Annakshetras. Their stomach is consequently upset. They suffer from so many physical ailments. They frequent hospitals. They do little Sadhana as their mind is preoccupied with thoughts of the body.

Unless you have a burning aspiration for God, the mind cannot be fixed on Him. Where your love is, there your mind is. Just as a miser constantly thinks of money and money alone, so a Bhakta has Ananya Bhakti — exclusive devotion for God. In Narada's Bhakti Sutras, Bhakti is defined as highest love for God. When you have intense love for God, everything else is forgotten. Then you will realize God.

Therefore you must do Bhajan, have Satsang and remember God. If you taste once the sweetness of God-remembrance, you will never forego Him. You will have the first taste of that experience in Satsang only.

Q : We are having Satsang with Papa.

Ramdas: Satsang must be within, not outside alone.

Q : We have taken refuge in you. Our mind is in Papa alone. Even if Papa drives us away, we will not go. You are everything — father, mother and all. We will not leave you even at the point of death.

10th February, 1961.

Ramdas: What is meant by remembrance of God? It is not simply uttering His name. The repetition of the Name must bring God into the mind. Otherwise, repetition is mechanical. It is no good repeating God's name like a parrot. Remembrance must develop into an intoxication of God; and that intoxication in turn must develop into God-consciousness, so much so you come to know that you and He are one; and thereafter you are aware of the divine presence at all times. In that state you forget the body. You may be conscious of the body to the extent necessary for talking, eating, walking and for its maintenance. But you have no desire for money, fame, name, sense-enjoyments, or anything of the world, because you are filled with divine ecstasy, divine joy. You behold God everywhere, you hear Him everywhere, you touch Him everywhere, because for you, in that state, there is nothing but God. And you know you are He. You are not different from Him. This is what Vedanta teaches us. This is God-realization.

In every religion there is a class of devotees who have attained the highest mystic experience. In Hinduism they are called Bhaktas. In Mohammedanism they are called Sufis. In Sikh religion they are called Udasis. These mystics have realized that they are not different from God. But in the orthodox religion — among Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc. — they cannot bear the idea of oneness with God. They consider it a blasphemy or insult to God if anybody says that he is one with Him. In some religions this was not tolerated and the person would be persecuted and hounded out of society. But the truth is you are He.

Jesus was a mystic. He boldly declared, 'I and my Father are one.' Mansoor who was a Sufi, declared, 'I am God.' Joan of Arc, a French woman, who was inspired by the presence of God within her, was burnt at the stake when she said she was speaking God's words. St. Theresa had universal vision and she saw God everywhere. So also St. Paul. He who sees God everywhere is God, because God alone can see God. He sees his own reflection everywhere; he himself is manifest everywhere. This is pure Vedanta. It is the height of Sufism, height of Bhakti, height of God-realization, not in the impersonal sense alone, but in the personal sense also. You take everybody as the embodiment of God. The whole universe is the manifestation of God. For you there is nothing but God. The so-called good and evil have no meaning for you. Just as you see your own reflection in the mirror, so you see the whole universe as your own reflection, not different from you. The mystics are a class by themselves and very difficult to be understood by the common people. Their sayings are mystic in character and so difficult to be easily understood. They speak in riddles. All our Sadhanas must lead us to that height of realization in which we know we are God, in which we see everything is God.

Q : What is God-consciousness?

Ramdas: You should know you are not the body, but the divine reality, pure wisdom, all-pervading light, infinite love, everlasting joy, all put together. *That* you are. Ordinarily man thinks he is body subject to birth, growth, decay, disease and death. But he is truly the changeless, birthless, deathless Atman, whose nature is bliss and peace. To realize this is to attain God-consciousness. Man, in his state of ignorance, dwells

in body-consciousness. When he rises to God-consciousness he knows he is God. How very different one is from the other! When Ramdas visited the house of a devotee in Seattle in America, the person who introduced Ramdas to a group of spiritual aspirants told them, 'I have brought God to show you. She was a lady and the leader of that group. Ramdas said, 'God has come to see God.'

Q : Papa made all of them God.

Ramdas: No. Man thinks he is the body, but he is God. There is no question of making or unmaking. Then you know you have not attained anything new. You have always been that. But you choose to pretend that you are a father, a brother, a son of so and so, that you belong to this place or that. All these you assume for the sake of Lila. But really you are He and that is a self-evident truth.

Q : On Sunday we had arranged a Bhajan at 'Guru Prasad', Trivellore. N. the singer did not come on that day. Photos of Papa and Mataji were-kept in a prominent place. We had invited the Trivellore Bhajan party. They came and when they learnt that N. would not come, their leader said, 'Excuse me, if you want me to do Bhajan you must place the picture of some God also with those photos. Then only I will start.' I replied, 'I have no God's picture here. I have one 'Ananda Vikatan' calendar with a picture of Muruga.' I placed it in the front. Then only he started. After Bhajan, he said, 'You have to excuse me.' I said I did not mind as I see my Papa in that picture also. Some people see God only in the pictures sold in the market.

Ramdas: Some people see God in temple images only, not outside. In the early stages this is natural.

One place is holy, another is not; temples are holy, mosques are holy, other places are not. It is better to get over that and feel the divine presence everywhere. When you see God in the photos of Papa and Mataji, why not in the other pictures also?

Q : We are doing like that for the last five years.

Ramdas: You must transcend all these things. You must find Him within.

Q : If he had wanted me to remove those photos I would have done so. I would have had no objection.

Ramdas: Then why did you keep Papa's and Mataji's photos for the Bhajan? You must see them in yourself and everywhere. The sooner you come to realize God as indwelling and all-pervading, the better. The photos may kindle some divine emotions. But you must not stop with that, because Papa and Mataji are everywhere. God is everywhere and you are everywhere. The sense of 'otherness' sets limits to the Illimitable. That is what you did and he also. He wanted a particular picture. You wanted our pictures. That means you both see God in pictures only.

Q : I keep them for the sake of outsiders.

Ramdas: What outsiders? You have made Papa and Mataji a fetish, while really Papa and Mataji are dwelling in the hearts of all. You must get that awareness. Papa is not only in your pockets or in your room. If you want really to get him, you must see him everywhere. You have put Papa on the wall in a frame.

Q : Smaller photos also I had. One set was sold and one I reserved for myself. Somebody insisted on having it. I gave it away.

Ramdas: Those photos arranged for the Bhajan, if anybody asks, will you give? Will you give it of your own accord? If not, you think Papa is only in those pictures.

A Devotee: He will give and replace it.

Ramdas: Make your heart a temple. God is within you. He is always there. This very question came up when Mataji first joined Ramdas. She was looking upon Ramdas' body as so holy that she was worshipping it daily. Ramdas thought she was caught in this worship of form. Ramdas told her, 'You have to see Papa in your heart.' 'How can I see you there?' she asked. Ramdas said, 'Stop this worship. Do not even prostrate before him.' She was garlanding Ramdas half a dozen times a day and prostrating any number of times. Ramdas asked her to stop all this external worship. She gave it up. No garlanding, no prostrating, no worshipping. Gradually what happened? She had already no thought of things of the world. So when this support of the personal worship was also cut off, where could the mind go? It went inward — it had no other place to go. Ramdas asked her to sit for meditation. She sat. For four or five hours she was unconscious of the world. She was immersed in her Self.

Therefore the mind must be withdrawn from external things so that it may turn inward and realize the Truth within.

Q: My father-in-law wanted Navagraha Homa, etc.

Ramdas: If you try to satisfy everybody, you will be nowhere. Then you will be a prey to doubts and fears. When you believe in these things, the mind will be externalised. You will have worries and anxieties.

Q: Can I go against the words of my elders?

Ramdas: When you want to realize the Truth there is nothing else for you to care about. If you want to please everybody, by all means do so. If they ask you to jump into the well, would you jump? That you will not do. So you should say, 'Let people praise me or blame me. I am doing what is good for me.'

Prahlada who was devoted to God did not care for the words of his father when he was warned not to worship God. Vibhishana abandoned his elder brother Ravana when asked not to be devoted to Sri Rama. If you want to realize God, you must be true to God within you and not mind the opposition from anybody. Bharata did not pay heed to his mother's counsel, but rejected her for the sake of Sri Rama. The path of truth is like a razor's edge. You must be brave. If Prahlada had obeyed his father he would never have been a Bhakta. Likewise, Vibhishana would have been a slave of Ravana, but he became a devotee of Sri Rama. It is not easy to follow the path of righteousness. 'The path of God is for heroes, not for cowards.'

Persons who strive to please one and all are like mudworms with no backbones. You know the story of 'an old man, his son and the donkey!' The old man tried to please everybody and in the end the donkey fell into the river and was drowned. Whatever wrongs that a man commits for pleasing others, affect him alone. Wife, son, father or others do not share them. If you are living in ignorance you suffer for it. If evil deeds are done by you, you alone are held responsible. Valmiki was robbing people in order to support his wife and children. 'For their sake I am doing this,' he said. Narada then told him, 'Ask them whether they are prepared to share your sins.' He asked them and they

replied, 'We are not prepared to share the sins.' Even if they were prepared, they could not share them. All have to reap the fruits of their actions. We must do what is good and right, whatever others may say.

Ramdas does not say that you should not do Homa or that there is any harm in doing it. It is to please yourself you are doing it. We are doing everything for our own pleasure and we say we are doing it for the sake of others. If we are not pleased, we will not do it. There are masters who urge their servants to do dishonest deeds. Some servants refuse to do so, and are ready to court dismissal. Some yield and say, 'Because the master told me I did it.' They become a party to it. They could have refused and faced the consequences if they had the grit in them. God gives courage and will-power if one wishes to walk on the path of Dharma. So the saints are heroes. They never care for the world or anybody's opinion. They tread the straight and narrow path of truth leading to God. Let people call them mad if they will. People may throw stones at them, but the heroic ones will not give up the path they have chosen. 'Do not be like the dumb driven cattle, be a hero in the strife.' If you are led like a herd of cattle, you will be stricken with fear and anxiety at every step of your life. Heroes are brave. They are free from all fears and sorrows. They are not even afraid of death. They say, 'Take away my body, you cannot take *me*. I am the immortal Spirit.'

Do you think God-realization is a joke? God wants full price to be paid for it — total dedication — entire and complete. Then He will come out from the depths of our being. We care for the opinion of persons. We have many ambitions for the future. God is made

a toy to play with. No. True devotees are ready even to die in order to attain Him. Because we are afraid of suffering, we compromise with the world and give up the path of Dharma — truth, righteousness. When we do so we have virtually given up God, because God can be had only by following the path of righteousness. If a person can get money by telling a lie, he is prepared to do it. Money rules the world. God is forgotten.

If you want to develop God-consciousness, you must feel His presence in the heart. It is no good worshipping a picture or an image. It may be helpful for a short period. But you must transcend it. People come to the Ashram here. They think it is like a temple. They peep here and there to find out where an image is. 'You are the image — living, talking and walking image,' Ramdas tells them. All are living images everywhere. Love, worship and serve them. Then you are worshipping God. Swami Vivekananda says, 'By worshipping stone images the worshipper's heart has turned into stone.' When poor people go to such a worshipper, he will not give them a single pie, but will say, 'Get away. Don't disturb me. I am worshipping God.'

Q : A devotee from Madras came to the Ashram. After returning from here he came to my office. 'I have seen a speaking God,' he said.

Ramdas: You ought to have told him, 'Speaking Gods are everywhere. You are a speaking God. Everybody speaks and everybody is God. God speaks through many tongues.'

Q : Kabir says, 'I went in search of God and found Him as myself.'

Ramdas: If you are really in search of God you will find you are He. You must search within, not outside. Kabir says, 'Where do you go in search of Him? He is with you.' In your meditation you get Him. You must turn your mind inwards. You do not see Him because there is so much impurity in your heart. Clean it. Then you will find Him. Kabir again says, 'Through Bhakti and Dhyana turn your gaze within and you will find Him. All these external observances do not lead you anywhere.' All saints in their teachings emphasise this.

Apply Guru Kripa, the eye-salve to your eyes. Then see. Your sight will be illumined. You will see Him within and without. In the waking, dreaming and sleeping states it is all Ram. That is the right vision. If you are sincere in your quest you will have Him. How long will you play like this as you are doing now? It is all tom-foolery. You appreciate miracles. What do you get from them? Some wonderful things are done here and there. They do not help you. You must be oblivious of the world. Without Vairagya and Abhyasa you cannot get God. When you are attached to the world, how can the mind go within and see God? Samarth Ramdas says to the mind, 'O gentle mind! Go along the path of devotion to God. Then you will in due course have the vision of God.' He calls the mind gentle as though he pats it on the back.

Look at the fate that overtook Ravana, Hiranyakasipu, Kaiser and Hitler. Still you have the pride that you can do everything. At one stroke, your pride is made to kiss the dust and you are nowhere. Give

up pride. Be humble. Walk on the right path and you will attain perfect peace and bliss.

Some people recite the forty Slokas of Samarth Ramdas, addressed to the mind, everyday and are not any the wiser for it! No change is seen in them. There is one who learnt the whole of the Gita — 18 chapters — by heart. He was repeating it ten times a day. Yet he was complaining, 'My mind is the same. There is no change. Impurities, anxieties, sorrows, fears, doubts are still there.'

Q : What is it due to, Papa?

Ramdas: They think that by doing Parayana they can get Hm. If they say, 'Chapati, dal, rice' any number of times, will the stomach be filled? If man gives up attachments he will realize God. But he does not give them up. He has so much hunger for worldly pleasures. The poor man wants to be rich, if not in this life, in the next life. So he carries with him this desire. For its fulfilment he has to take another birth. He carries with him this desire life after life. Desirelessness — absence of attachment to objects— is a condition for God-realization.

Firstly, you must be free from Moha — attachment. If you are at all interested, let it be for the whole universe. Then you develop universal consciousness. But you are concerned only with those who are related to you, not outside that circle. If any one of those near and dear to you die, you are affected. You are caught in the meshes of Moha. Your heart is attached to perishable things. Universal vision means love and sympathy for the whole world. The sense of nationality, caste or creed does not cloud this vision. He who

has this vision loves everybody for the sake of the Atman. His love goes to all alike. This is Samadarshan, Brahmi Sthiti. He knows that he is Brahman and that Brahman alone *is*.

11th February, 1961.

Ramdas: By constant remembrance of God you rise beyond body-consciousness and dwell in divine consciousness.

Q: Will one then become God?

Ramdas: You will realize God. As long as body-consciousness is there, the sense of separation will remain. So you will be in the physical plane in which there is bondage, misery, ignorance and darkness. Rise above body-idea and you will become one with the Divine. Your life will be full; it will be replete with light, wisdom, peace, power and joy. You will know that you are immortal. When you think you are the body, there arise the sense of seeing, sense of hearing, sense of touch, etc., and you forget your own Self or God. Your whole pursuit becomes a search for objects of the senses, a desire to possess them for enjoyment and you get caught up in an endless maze. You may be chanting Ramnam now and again and talking about God, but as long as your main pursuit is the objects of senses you cannot realize Him. You must rise above body-consciousness, forget the world and then you will realise Him. As it is, the world is too much with you. The divine element is ignored and forgotten.

The man who is leading a life of the senses cannot imagine the joy one can have by getting over the body-idea and living in the Divine. In the world people

are engaged in activities of various kinds for the sake of gratifying their senses. The higher pursuit is lost sight of. How to enjoy, how to acquire, how to possess and how to preserve this is what engrosses man's whole attention throughout life. If he is devoted to God at all, it is for the sake of material prosperity, name, fame and position. This is all what he wants from God and that is the aim of his worship. He tries to acquire certain things by the grace of God. He forgets that whatever he acquires is impermanent. Either they fall away from him or he falls away from them. In either case he becomes miserable. Not only that, but even while he possesses them he encounters troubles in protecting them. Somebody cheats him, somebody robs him or something is lost. Then he laments over it, sometimes in regret and sometimes in remorse.

Ramdas does not mean that you should not pursue your legitimate activities in order to earn and look after your family. But of all things, the one aim that should be kept in view is the realization of God, by looking upon all people as manifestations of God and by dedicating all your thoughts and actions to Him. The nature of the service you do should be such as will lead you to the perception of God in all beings and creatures. Service done to whom? To God; not to the human being as such, but as manifestation of God. Service done in this spirit blesses him that renders it as well as him that receives it. If, on the other hand, you live only for your own sake, for the sake of your family and relations, your life becomes dry and insipid and brings you a crop of anxieties and miseries. Your vision becomes thereby so narrow that you find God-realization a distant goal. The more circumscribed your vision is, the more

miserable you become. You must expand your vision more and more. Only a person of the widest vision can realize God.

There are many who are doing Sadhana. They do not know why they are doing it. Their conception of God is very limited and narrow. They must have in the first place a right conception of God before they try to attain Him., They take Him as an individual, as a person only, who lives in Vaikunta, in Kailas, in Satya Loka or in heaven. They adore Him, take His name, do Puja to His image. What is the benefit? By the power of faith they may get something they ask for. But God-realization cannot be had that way. You must realize Him as pervading the entire universe and beyond. For that you must dissolve your ego-sense in the vast, infinite consciousness of the Divine. Then you feel like a bird released from the cage — happy and cheerful. You are not bound by anything. You enjoy eternal peace and bliss, because you have united your will with the divine will, your consciousness with the divine consciousness, your life with the universal life.

Many do Sadhana for thirty or forty years. They say they have not gained anything. The goal they have placed before them is not very clear to them. Who is God and what is God? Saints say Vaikunta is within you, Kailas is within you, heaven is within you, God is within you. They ask you to direct your vision inward, dive into the source of your being. God is the all-pervading Atman. He is changeless, immanent, all-inclusive and transcendent. There is nothing outside Him, nothing beyond Him. In that infinite Consciousness you must lose yourself. Now the body-consciousness is not there. You know that you are present everywhere

at the same time. You know that you are the Truth, nameless, formless, changeless, birthless, deathless, infinite and eternal. From the personal you must go to the impersonal, from the changing to the unchanging, from the unreal to the real, from that which has name and form to that which is nameless and formless.

The question is often asked: When do we get our Vasanas destroyed? When can the desire for worldly enjoyments be completely rooted out? Many are struggling and struggling. They are still in the clutches of lower desires — physical and mental. How can they get over them? In the Gita the answer is given. When you surrender yourself to God and get rid of your ego-sense, you realize you are the all-pervading Truth and behold the Divine everywhere. Till then the Vasanas will go on harassing you. When you have Sarvatma Bhava—the vision and experience that everything is He — then the Vasanas will be completely destroyed. Now your senses, mind, body and everything turn divine. There is no room for Vasanas, which are the outcome of the individual sense. When the individual sense has disappeared, naturally Vasanas must go. Unless you remove their source, which is ego-sense, they cannot be eradicated. There is no use of cutting the branches for destroying a tree. It must be pulled up by the roots and thrown away. Then it cannot grow up again. Therefore lay the axe at the source of all sense-desires, attachments, clings to worldly things. That requires a ceaseless remembrance of God, not merely utterance. When you say, 'Ram, Ram, Ram,' your mind may wander in many directions. The mind must fix itself on God when you repeat the Name.

13th February, 1961.

Ramdas: When we fall through our weakness, we put the blame for it on God and call Him merciless. If we attribute lack of mercy to God, it is no use depending on Him, and there can be no hope of any grace flowing to us from Him. We say God is omnipotent, all-wise, all-love and all-mercy. It is to such a God that we surrender ourselves. And if He fails us, then the attributes given to Him are meaningless. God never lets us down. It is we who fail. You might have read the most inspiring poem of Francis Thompson, 'The Hound of Heaven'. In that he says that God is ever pursuing us like a hound, to catch us. We hear the tread of His footsteps. We run away from Him. We must be willing to be caught by Him. You see, the mother sometimes pursues her child. But it runs away. She is not able to catch it. If it goes on running here and there, it cannot be in the arms of the mother.

You have heard of the 'prodigal son' in the Bible. He gave up his father, took his patrimony with him and wasted everything. For him life became most miserable. He then returned to the father, penniless and helpless. The father welcomed him, lovingly embraced him and fed him. Like the 'prodigal son' we must some day return to God from whom we have separated ourselves. Then we will be welcomed by Him.

Now Ramdas is reading out to you his articles: 'Divine Alchemy,' 'The Lure Eternal', and 'How God Came into My Life'.....

Having listened to these you can form an idea of the severe struggles Ramdas had to pass through before attaining God. We should not make the mistake

of thinking that by our efforts we can get Him. Really, by His will, grace and power alone we can have Him, Even before Ramdas left Mangalore in 1922, it had become increasingly clear to him that God had taken him up for granting him the vision and experience of His light, power and joy. In the book, 'In Quest of God', you will find, he left Mangalore not of his own accord. God wanted him to go out of Mangalore and wander about. Everything Ramdas did was at the prompting or inspiration of God. When we are on the path, the best way is to struggle with the knowledge that He is making us struggle. He is giving us the incentive to do Sadhana. The teacher gives a lesson to his pupil and watches. So also He is watching and guiding us in every action. When led into solitudes Ramdas went there like an automaton. God willed, 'You must go there,' and he obeyed. In the midst of wild beasts, he had absolutely no fear because he was obeying the Master's command. And nothing untoward happened.

After Ramdas had got the initiation from his Guru, guidance always came to him from within. As he recognized this he would not care for the advice of anybody. Many told him he was going on the wrong path. But the fact was he did not know what he was doing was right or wrong. God had set him on the path. And he had no fear of fall or frustration. We must always feel He is guiding us. God must inspire us in all things. We should feel God leads us on. There is no reasoning or planning here. The urge comes from within and we act. Many people struggle egoistically for years without any spiritual attainment.

Q: Grace comes first.

Ramdas: You ought to know that God is directing you. You must be conscious of it. For instance, at the age of thirtyeight suddenly the change came over Ramdas. He was leading an ordinary life. Hunger for God came to him because God gave it to him. Why did he not have it earlier? For, God did not will it. He felt that it was He who called him away. In his book he has stated that God drove him away from Mangalore. In fact, God led him away, just as a mother leads the child by the hand to any place she likes. In the book, 'World is God', the first chapter is entitled 'God leads'. 'What made you give up everything and go away?' they ask. 'God made him do so,' says Ramdas. His renunciation was not reasoned out or planned out. The urge was so strong that he could not resist it. It was all in His hands. God did whatever He liked with him. There was no question of why and wherefore.

Q: There cannot be any compromise with the world then.

Ramdas: There is no question of compromise with the world, because world itself is Brahman. There is a saying by Sankara: ब्रह्म सत्यं जगन्मिथ्या 'God is Truth, the world is illusion'. The world as Brahman is real and the world as world is illusion. God Himself is manifest everywhere, as everything. The manifest is He, the unmanifest is He. The manifest and the unmanifest are not two separate entities. Shiva and Shakti are not two. Just as the sun cannot exist without its light, and that light cannot exist without the sun, so God and His power are one and the same. God is at once Purusha and Prakriti. There our minds cannot reach. Therefore the Gita calls Him unthinkable being—Achintya Rupa — or greatest secret — Uttamam

Rahasyam. We cannot imagine what He is and what He is not. At once He is everything and beyond everything. He is beyond our comprehension. Therefore silence is He. Mouna is Brahman.

It appears two boys were sent to Kashi for studying Shastras under a famous pandit of that place. They came back on the completion of their studies. Their father asked one of the boys, 'Have you understood what Brahman is?' 'Yes,' he said. 'What is it?' the father asked. The boy quoted profusely from the Upanishads and other texts. 'Son, you have not understood Brahman,' said the father. He called the other son and asked him, 'You have studied everything. Do you know what Brahman is?' He remained silent. Thrice he was put the question. Still no answer. Then the father said, 'You have understood what Brahman is'.

The man who has realized Brahman cannot express what it is. All we have to do is to follow a course of discipline to still the mind. Then we will know the Truth. One cannot express what it is, but one can experience it. Therefore Buddha never attempted to define the ultimate Reality. Ramdas came across a pregnant sentence in his teachings in 'The Light of Asia' by Sir Edwin Arnold: 'Do not dip the string of thought into the unfathomable; he who questions errs, he who answers errs.' He does not define that state. He calls that state Nirvana, which is the same as Moksha. Negatively you can say, 'It is not this; it is not this.' You cannot say what it is. So we have only to follow the path chalked out for us by the sages and the saints. They ask us to go along the path trodden by them. We ourselves must walk the path and reach the goal. There is no use of speculating about it. You must go beyond

all thoughts if you want to enter the realm of immortality. Your intellect cannot follow you there. Forget everything and still the mind, then you will realize that you are the eternal Truth — Silence. The world is non-existent for you for the time being. Then you know who you are and what the world is. You are Brahman and the world is Brahman.

Stilling the mind is very difficult. When you become a perfect witness of the mind, the mind ceases to be. You will experience an ecstasy born of the consciousness of the Truth that you are. Since the mind disappears and you are established in that consciousness, you are always happy, calm and serene. Sages point out various ways of approach suited to the different temperaments.

Q: Are there different Sadhanas for different types of temperaments?

Ramdas: Yes. So long as we do not know who we are in reality, we are caught up in the lower planes of life. We feel life is a bondage. There is no satisfaction—everywhere we face obstruction, anxiety, sorrow. This is the common lot of all. The soul within them struggles restlessly for freedom. At that time the contact of a great soul is essential. It is enough if we merely see him. We will be imbued with great courage. That is the first step.

14th February, 1961.

Ramdas: There are three ways of transmitting divine power by the saint to the disciple. They are by touch, sight and silence. It should be noted that talk is nowhere stated as a way of transmitting the spiritual

grace. A saint's touch heals and awakens. So we ask saints to place their hands on our head by way of blessing us; or we prostrate before them and touch their holy feet with our head. This brings about a marvellous change in us. The mind becomes pure and calm. In the same way, sight also is very powerful. The saint's gaze thrills our heart. The third way is, he stills our mind by his silence. Thus, it is by touch, by sight and by silence he influences people mysteriously. He is not deliberately doing it. It is a spontaneous act. By this spiritual transmission we become still, calm and serene. The time factor does not affect us. We are lost in rapture in the presence of the saint. Ramdas went to see Ramana Maharshi. He never talked. He gazed into Ramdas' eyes and the result was simply wonderful! At other places he received the influence by touch also. Hands were placed upon his head.

It is enough if you sit quiet before the saint. He need not talk to you. If you understand anything from his talks, it will be only intellectual. You cannot this way have experience. Your mind will be silenced through the impact of the saint's personality on you. It is rightly said Mouna is Brahman. A still, pure, calm mind is itself Self or Brahman.

Q : How is the influence of the saint felt by the aspirant?

Ramdas: No deliberate act is done by the saint. His influence is so powerful that transformation takes place in the disciple when he is merely present before him. It is the power of the Atman. The senses and the mind have nothing to do with it. Body and eyes are only vehicles for transmitting it. Otherwise there is no meaning in going to see a saint and having contact

with him. Our experience is that such a contact awakens and illumines us in a mysterious way. It is difficult to say that saints have got a mind at all functioning in them. It is the mind that creates duality. If you want to have a non-dual experience then the mind must cease to exist. The mind is responsible for all the mischief. So annihilation of the mind is necessary. Buddha talks of extinction of desire. When desire is dead, mind is also dead. Buddhists use the word Trishna to denote the craving for worldly objects. That must go. That is possible only when the desire for worldly things is replaced by a burning aspiration for God-realization. This aspiration is fulfilled when you realize God. Yours is then a desireless state in which you live, move and have your being in Brahman and as Brahman. The joy that you experience then will fill you through and through. It will enter into every pore of your being. You will become an embodiment of bliss. In all religions, in all the teachings of great spiritual Masters of the world, the same point is driven home into us — destruction of desire. How to conquer desire? Be a Jignasu. The flame of intense desire for God must be kindled in you. Then all the desires for worldly things are burnt away. God-realization then comes to you most naturally.

Hunger for God we get in the company of saints. We cannot obtain it by our own efforts. It is generally considered that surrender comes towards the end of Sadhana. It is not so. Surrender, no doubt, is complete in the end by the total elimination of the ego-sense. But we have to surrender ourselves to God from the very start. 'O God, you are the sole doer. I am nothing. You are everything.' Let us have this

attitude when doing Sadhana. Otherwise, if we think we are doing it by our own will, then there is no possibility of our attaining anything. 'First surrender to God, then take His name:' so says Saint Jnaneshwar in one of his songs. We now know He is the doer. We are taking His name not by our own initiative but at His prompting. Sometimes the hunger for God is there so long as we are in the company of saints, but when we go away the hunger disappears.

When Ramcharandas was with Ramdas, he told him, 'You must rely on yourself. The influence of a saint may give you a push in the spiritual path, but you will have to tread the path yourself.' He did not believe it. Ramdas said, 'Your mind is externalized. How can you find the Truth within? Ramdas is of help to you no doubt. You must not cling on to the Guru always. Go alone and do Sadhana, turn your mind within in meditation and lose yourself in God. Do not always depend upon the external contact.' He replied, 'So long as I am in your company my mind is pure, otherwise not.'

Go within and be merged in the Self. Realize the Self. That must be done by yourself. In this connection Ramdas often quotes the example of Mataji. Some people worship the image day after day so that attraction for other things may disappear. The mind is concentrated on the image. Later on they turn the mind inward and realize the Atman. Thus image worship becomes a means for realizing the Atman.

In image worship, we superimpose on the image the Atman in us. That is Avahana. When the worship is over the superimposed Atman is withdrawn from the image. That is Visarjana. In this way we come to know

that we worship our own Atman in the form of the image. In the end we get the vision of the Atman. Some people directly realize the Self through meditation. They detach the mind from external contacts or desire for things. The result is immediate Self-realization. Therefore, it is said that Self-realization comes in the twinkling of an eye. The divine light dawns in you. As Sri Ramakrishna has said, the darkness in the cave, of thousands of years, is dispelled in a second when the match is lighted. In the same way ignorance is removed in a second. Self-purification is a condition precedent to Self-realization. The mind must be purified. You hear about the Truth, reflect on It in your mind, meditate on It and then realize it. Therefore Sadhana is necessary.

For doing Sadhana, Vairagya is essential. When you try to concentrate your mind on God, the mind wanders away because you have a greater thirst for worldly things than for God. If you have Vairagya you feel sad when the mind runs out to external things. Those people who have no Vairagya do not feel so. Vairagya helps you in your Abhyasa. When you sit for meditation, only one thought—the thought of God—should rule your mind to the exclusion of all other thoughts; and through that thought you get at the Truth in you. Stilling the mind is not easy. Your longing for God must be so intense that other thoughts should not intrude on your mind.

After realization of the Self you will be thought-free. Then you will be wondering how things happen. Even your intellect does not function. 'God makes me do things,' you now say. This, ordinary men cannot understand. In the talks, ways and actions of saints

you do not see the slightest tinge of desire. Usually, if you see anything good you desire to have it. The mind craves for the objects of the senses. Saints who are enjoying the bliss of the Atman have no attraction for them. Theirs is desireless hearing, desireless eating, desireless seeing, desireless touching. Their mind and senses are ever filled with divine bliss and joy. Every part of their body thrills with divine ecstasy. They possess tremendous spiritual power. Those who go near them are influenced by them.

Some years ago during his Sadhana period when Ramdas was walking, he felt that his body was walking and not he. He was static, the body was moving. His body as well as the bodies of others were also seen moving, but the all-pervading Atman was not moving. Those moving forms were like shadows. That experience was there for some time. Then he saw them like waves or bubbles in the ocean. Waves, bubbles, foam are all water in particular forms. All is water, but they go by separate names and they appear differently because of their movement. So you see there are two — moving and unmoving. They are indistinguishably one. You cannot separate them. Although you call it wave, you cannot take away the wave by itself. Brahman in movement is Prakriti. Prakriti at rest is Brahman. You cannot distinguish one from the other. Therefore God, the truth, is indefinable. The intellect is baffled. You can express it best by silence.

15th February, 1961.

Ramdas: Yesterday our talk ended abruptly. It is proved in the case of saints their minds are dead. In other words, all their desires are dead. The mind is

nothing but a repository of desires for the objects of the senses. When the mind is dead, the senses do function, but the objects of the senses are perceived as manifestations of God. As a Maharashtrian saint says, the sense objects have become for the saint God Himself. In the same way all beings and things are He. We cannot see everything as divine because we have got a mind which is obsessed by desires. Desires debar us from the vision of the Divine in each and everything.

We were talking yesterday about the destruction of the mind, that is, of desires. But what about the heart? In the saint the heart is there, but is transformed, illumined, purified. So the heart which the saint possesses is the heart of God, full of forgiveness, compassion, love and kindness. If God is not all-loving, kind and gracious to us, we, devotees have no hope of salvation. Our sufferings must touch Him. Our cry must be heard by Him and responded to. The response comes from His heart. When we forgive others for the wrongs done to us, it is not the human heart that forgives. It is a divine quality revealed in the heart. When we see the sufferings of others, our heart melts with compassion, and the compassion is not a human trait; it is a divine trait. Man loves his own people, friends and relatives, but not the others who are outside this circle. That is a love born of attachment to the forms to which he is related. Divine love springs from purified and illumined heart. Such a love embraces everyone. It goes to everybody alike, whether relation or no relation, whether friend or foe. To love all alike is distinctly a divine quality. It is born of our vision of the universal Truth. On gaining this experience we love all beings because the Self in us and the Self in them are one and the same.

Yajnavalkya told his wife Maitreyi, 'Love your husband not for the sake of the husband, but for the sake of the Self.' So no outside differences will come in the way of your loving all alike, because love is not based upon any physical consideration, but upon the all-pervading Reality that is your Self. You love even those who persecute you. When they need your help, you serve and help them in all possible ways so that you may free them from their distress. Your heart is so noble and enlightened that you do not mind whether people praise you or blame you. This is the heart of God and not a human heart. The human heart moves in a narrow circle. The divine heart moves in a circle which, as Swami Vivekananda says, has its 'centre everywhere and circumference nowhere.' The love-circle in this case is limitless, infinite; it embraces the whole universe. This love is born of universal vision and this universal vision is born of the realization of the universal Self, which is your real Self. So the heart in a saint is the heart of God. By his contact even the worst of sinners, even hardened atheists, have turned towards God. He forgives and redeems us. He pours on us his grace and grants us the joy of the infinite Self.

Valmiki was a robber and committed innumerable crimes. The saint who saw him and who was also about to be robbed by him, awakened him and made him realize the Self. The robber became a Maharshi through the kindness and grace of the saint. He did not reject him, saying 'You are unfit to be saved.' The saint gave him the Name and turned his mind towards God, and blessed him. In course of time he became so exalted, illumined, that his old sinful life was transformed into a new and enlightened life. The result

was he realized what he was in reality and became an object of admiration and reverence for ages. Saints are God in human form.

If we develop love for all alike and are kind and good to everybody, even to those who look upon us with the eye of enmity, we have a heart which is God's own. 'Blessed is he who is pure in heart, for he shall see God.' These are the words of Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount. Our heart must be transformed and illumined with divine love, peace and compassion. In our distress whom can we approach except God? If He is aloof and has no relationship with the world and stands unaffected by our prayers, our appeal is of no avail. He has feeling and love, and is full of compassion and kindness to those who surrender themselves to Him. His love extends to all alike. Who gets the greatest benefit? Those devotees who place complete reliance on Him. In the Gita there is a saying, 'I am the same to everybody, but My Bhaktas are dear to Me.' Devotees are those who turn towards Him, depend upon Him, surrender themselves to Him. Such a devotee is saved by Him. It behoves us to take advantage of God's gracious offer to save us.

The lamp in this hall sheds light on every one of us without making invidious distinctions. Suppose we get far away from this light, then it is not taken advantage of, which means we do not care for the light. Those who are in the darkness, whoever it be, when they come near the light, they enjoy its blessings. It does not say, 'You are bad. I will not give you light.' So God's mercy goes equally to all who approach Him. To approach Him means to have faith, devotion and love. God's grace is always upon us. In fact, we have not to

get it specially from Him by appealing to Him. But we have only to become aware of it. Some are aware of it, some are not. If the grace is not on us, we will not be able to do anything. Whatever we do, whatever we think, whatever we feel, in all our ways and movements the grace is working, but we do not recognize it. We think we do everything. That is the mistake. If we feel that by God's grace we do everything, then we are conscious of it. It is there all the time. We are asked to remember Him constantly so as to become aware of His grace. It is not a new thing that we have to attain. When we are aware of the grace, we know we are the Self. Our prayer to God must be to give us this awareness. When we realize the Self, we know God alone exists and everything happens by His will. This way is the easiest. Efface the ego-sense by surrender — 'Thy will be done, Oh God, not mine. Thy will alone prevails. I am nothing; Thou art everything.' Ultimately we say, 'Thou alone existeth; I am also Thyself.'

Saints are very tender-hearted. They cannot bear to see the sufferings of others. Suffering is the result of ignorance. So they try to free persons from ignorance. We say God is love. As impersonal God, there is no movement, change, name or form in Him. He is only a detached witness. But as the personal God, He has feeling, love, mercy. It is through His grace alone we can realize Him.

There is a saying, कृपा हि केवलम् 'Kripa alone is.' God is verily the embodiment of mercy. We can be saved only by His grace. There is no other way. Some say we must deserve to receive grace. Even for deserving, we should have grace — grace in the beginning, grace in the middle, grace in the end.

For thirtyeight years Ramdas was engaged in worldly activities. Then a turn came in his life which transformed him completely—a change that made him go Godward, brushing all other things aside. He became conscious of grace. Grace has made him what he is now. It is grace that works in and through him. It is not by our endeavour that anything can be done. We must feel He makes us do things and His will controls everything. Accept it intellectually to begin with and try to feel from moment to moment that it is He who is guiding us, and causing all movements in and through us. The ego-sense will be kept away as far as possible when you do Sadhana in this manner. That is how Ramdas felt when the change came over him. He was entirely in God's hands. So Ramdas was feeling that He was the sole doer and sole being in the world. Then the 'I' dropped away by itself. He could not say 'I'. People ask him, 'How is it you are speaking in the third person?' The sense of 'I-ness' vanished. It had dawned upon him that he as an individual did not exist. During his wandering life he used to say 'I'. But after he came to Mangalore cave he found that the 'I' had faded away. He could not say 'I'. This change came over him not by his effort or by his decision, but by divine grace, divine will, whatever you may call it. It was a sudden change. Thereafter the one burden of his song has been: 'divine grace,' 'divine will,' 'we are absolutely nothing.'

Ramdas was considering himself as a servant of God. Later he realized that servant and God are one. Then he did not know how to refer to himself. He sometimes speaks now as 'I' and sometimes as 'he'. You see, in his writings, he now uses the first person 'I'.

It is all the same whether he uses 'I' or 'he', because all these are He, the one Truth. Formerly there was to him the division: World and God. Now world is God. Whatever he talks about is of God. His impulses, thoughts, words, everything is God. He talks, moves, lives and has his being in God; everything is God, everywhere it is God. Manifest, unmanifest, moving, not moving, changing, not changing, with name and form, without name and form — everything is He. He is the all-inclusive, all-pervading, all-transcendent Divine. There is nothing besides Him.

17th February, 1961.

Ramdas: Yesterday was a blank day for you.

Q: Emptiness is fullness, Papa.

Ramdas: Do you mean to say you want Ramdas to be silent today also?

Q: Papa must make us empty.

Ramdas: You must allow Ramdas to do so.

Q: How are we to do it?

Ramdas: By surrender to him.

Q: The trouble is we do not know the full meaning of surrender.

Ramdas: If you think you are something, then you are full of undesirable things. Surrender is, 'I am *nothing*. You are everything.' By this way you will be empty completely.

There was a Chinese philosopher by name Lao Tzu. He called the ultimate Truth 'Tao.' Tao means emptiness. He proved that emptiness means strength,

power, fullness. He gave several examples to prove this. You see, in this hall there are four walls. It is not the walls we are making use of, but the empty space within them. In a vessel, which is the most useful portion? The empty space within it. Which is the most useful thing in a wheel? The hole in the wheel, without which it is perfectly useless. So if you empty yourself completely, you create something like a vacuum within yourself. Then you are really full; you are most useful. A flute, unless it is empty, is of no use. It must be hollow, otherwise it will not produce any music. That emptiness Lao Tzu calls Tao.

Q : Somebody makes the flute empty. It cannot become empty by itself.

Ramdas: That somebody is yourself.

Q : Then the ego comes, Papa.

Ramdas: You must empty yourself of the ego and then the Flute-player will take you up. 'I am nothing. You are everything.' That is the way to empty yourself. We pose we are something. There lies all the trouble. Feel that you are nothing, then you will become everything. If you feel that you are something, then you are nothing.

Some years ago a man came here brought by a friend of his. He had once lived in Burma. He was mentally affected by the explosion of a bombshell. He was taken to be mad. But he felt he was a cipher. He was brought here in order to get cured of his trouble. But the man who was supposed to be mad was cheerful, laughing always. Ramdas asked him, 'What is the matter with you?' He said, 'I am a zero.' 'In what sense are you saying so?' asked Ramdas. He replied, 'I

am hollow. People say I should be sad and not cheerful, but I am a zero.' Ramdas told the man's friend, 'You look like a most worried person. Look at that man. He is hollow, and he is happy. Cure is, indeed, needed for you, not for him. He is quite happy and cheerful. You think you are something and your face shows that you are full of misery. He has rosy cheeks, well-built body, fair complexion and his face is wreathed in smiles. There is no ego-sense in him.' The friend said, 'The members of his family are very much worried about him.' Ramdas asked the man, 'Are you worried about them?' 'I am a zero. What should I worry about?' said he. Worry does not enter a heart which remains always hollow. After two days' stay they left — the one as cheerful, the other as worried, as ever. The former had no sense of responsibility about anything. Perhaps we all require a bombshell to burst before us to make us all ciphers too!

In Zen Buddhism training is given through a process of shocks. The Master speaks suddenly some absurd words to the disciple. That stuns him. His mind becomes still that instant because of the shock imparted to it. Thus the Masters transmit a power and bring about an inner transformation. Zen Buddhism is prevalent mostly in Japan. It is also practised in America, where it is taught in universities. 'Zen' means Dhyan or meditation. They have Zen monasteries in Japan in different places. We had been to Tokyo, but there are no such monasteries there. We did not go to Kyoto where there are. But we met an authority on Zen Buddhism, Dr. D. T. Suzuki. He gave us an idea of what it is. They say that Zen existed before Buddha. Buddha was only an exponent of Zen

creed. That is their claim. They have a process of meditation also by which thoughts disappear from the mind and are not allowed to get in.

In America the influence of Buddhism is very great. In universities there are students who are great admirers of Buddhism. The highest compliment was given to Ramdas by one of the students of the Stanford University when a question was put to them by their professor, Dr. F. Spiegelberg, who arranged for our stay in San Francisco. The question was, 'How far did Ramdas' visit help you in your studies?' One student answered, 'After seeing Ramdas we have come to believe that Buddha existed.'

When Ramdas went to the American Academy of Asian Studies, San Francisco, he climbed up the stairs and came in front of a room in which Dr. Spiegelberg was teaching a group of students. On seeing Ramdas he exclaimed, 'Am I dreaming? Are you really here in flesh and blood!' Saying this he touched and felt Ramdas. He then introduced Ramdas to his students. The next day he took us round the Stanford University.

Some people asked Ramdas, 'Have you seen God?' Ramdas replied, 'If he had not seen God, he would not have come here to tell you about Him.' 'Do you think Christ was God?' was another question. 'Yes. Is it necessary for an Indian and a Hindu to come and tell you this?' asked Ramdas. That person did not put any more questions. It shows many people who profess Christianity do not believe that Christ is an incarnation.

Many such questions were put to him in a friendly spirit. Everywhere Ramdas met only friendliness, love

and hospitality. A Maharashtrian saint says, 'He who has made God his friend receives love and friendliness from all people in the world.' That means, if you see God in all beings, you will be loved by all beings, because God is all mercy and kindness. You give love and receive love.

Q : Jesus Christ was an embodiment of love. Yet he was crucified!

Ramdas: It is not that his love has failed. In crucifixion it has found its triumph and fulfilment. It shows love sacrifices itself completely. It does not demand any recompense. In Christ's case, he was an embodiment of love no doubt. The crucifixion was as willed by the Divine. He drew millions and millions towards him and he is doing it even now because of that supreme sacrifice. The crucifixion was a landmark in the history of the world, by which millions were turned Godward and they were saved.

Q : Any way, the crucifixion does not portend well for aspirants.

Ramdas: You do not want to be crucified! For the sake of saving the world, we can allow ourselves to be crucified. We are afraid. Therefore it does not appeal to us. Most of the saints of the world were martyrs. Some were killed, tormented, beheaded, shot dead, crucified, poisoned. Socrates was poisoned. Gandhiji was shot dead. Jesus was crucified. Dayanand Saraswati was poisoned. You see in the lives of saints how much they were persecuted! They never hated anybody. Their heart was pure, and they were all love, affection, kindness, forgiveness. That is the nature of saints and great Masters.

Judas was responsible for Jesus' crucifixion. He betrayed him. He told the guard who came to arrest him, 'I would kiss a certain person in that group. Know him to be Jesus.' 'Judas-kiss' it is called. The guards then fell on him, bound him hand and foot and took him away. But what was the attitude of Jesus towards them? Was it not one of love and mercy? 'Oh God, forgive them, for they know not what they do,' was his prayer. A pure and great soul sacrifices himself in order to bring solace, light and goodness into the hearts of millions. Christ died that others might live. What happened to Judas? After Jesus' crucifixion he could not bear to live any longer, having brought about the death of the most innocent man. He went and hanged himself.

The inherent greatness of great souls is revealed when they undergo torment, suffering and persecution at the hands of the ignorant. Goldsmith in one of his poems has said that great souls are like aromatic plants. If you take the leaves of these plants and crush them, the fragrance comes out. Take the Tulsi leaves and crush them; the smell comes out. Under persecution the great souls reveal their greatness. They care little for the suffering they pass through. They accept it cheerfully. Jesus could have run away if he wanted to. He knew on the previous night that he would be crucified the next day. Such was the plight of Socrates as well. He knew he would be given poison and would have to die. His disciples told him, 'We will take you to some other country so that you can avoid this cruel death.' He said, 'No. Can you take me to a place where I will never die?' They said, 'No, you will die there also.' He replied, 'Why not here then? Why should I be a coward? The body dies. Let it go. I am immortal.

I have been teaching you that the soul is immortal. I cannot be false to my words.' The next day he cheerfully took the poison given to him and died. Thus he revealed to what heights of spirituality he had risen. He knew he was the immortal, deathless Spirit. Death has no terrors for Self-realized souls.

18th February, 1961.

Ramdas. On what shall we talk?

Q : Papa, yesterday you asked us to make the mind empty. That is putting a 'full stop' to all questions. So we cannot ask anything now. But how can we silence the mind except through your grace?

Ramdas: That alone is to be done by divine grace! How do other things happen? When you say, 'I am doing this, I shall do that,' do you wait for divine grace? 'I will do this and I will do that:' this is the language you commonly employ. Only in the matter of silencing the mind, grace is necessary! Other things you do. So long as the ego-sense is there, you have to struggle in order to silence the mind. When you have surrendered, you take everything that happens as by divine will. That means the ego-sense has completely disappeared.

Q : Surrender is the last stage then, Papa?

Ramdas: Yes. So long as you have the ego-sense you have to struggle. At the end of the struggle you come to know that you have not achieved anything. You feel you are helpless. Then God comes to your help. But as long as you think you can help yourself you must struggle. Struggle ceases in surrender. Thereafter you say, 'Oh God, You do everything.' Now

you find everything is done by His will and power. Surrender gives you this knowledge. The ego-sense is wiped out not only in the inner silence, but also in all your active life.

When the mind is still the ego-sense is absent. Struggle ceases. Then whatever you do, whatever efforts you make, you feel that God is inspiring you. You cheerfully face everything that happens to you. Success and failure, honour and dishonour, praise and blame, gain and loss are same to you. You know by divine will alone everything happens. Life becomes then easy, flowing, painless. Even if you work hard the whole day, you are not tired, you are not disgusted, because divine energy flows through you. In this state you have realized that you are the universal Consciousness, static, calm, serene. You are then both the witness and the witnessed.

So long as we think we are doing something ourselves as individual beings, we are merely struggling and achieving nothing spiritually. When we know that the divine power active in the universe is responsible for all that we do, the idea 'I am the doer' disappears. Prakriti is doing everything and Purusha is the unaffected witness. When the ego-sense rises in us, the whole game is spoiled. We are caught up in the meshes of Karma. Sometimes we are happy, sometimes unhappy. Now there cannot be unbroken serenity, ecstasy and joy.

'Abandoning all duties come to Me alone for shelter,' so says Sri Krishna in the Gita. Surrender is the highest Dharma. Then mind is not there. Mind works only on the lower plane. Apra Prakriti puts you into a state of ignorance. Surrender makes you rise above the Apra Prakriti and then the Para Prakriti is acti-

vating you in all ways. So you are not caught in the toils of Karma. Action flows out of you. You are not bound by it, because the ego is not there. So there is no desire for fruits of action. Action is pure and flowing and done in playful spontaneity. The bodily movements are all playful movements. The greatest obstacle in realizing the Self is the sense of doership. When you find the action is done through you by the divine power, the sense of doership disappears with the result that the ego-sense also disappears. That instant you realize the Self.

In meditation, when you are absorbed for the time being, you are conscious of the Self because you have identified yourself with it. But when you enter the field of action the sense of doership takes hold of you. This creates great disturbance in your mind which you had controlled and subdued in meditation. So you must identify yourself in meditation with the divine Spirit, and all actions should be dedicated to the divine power. Thus you keep away the ego-sense even when active in the world. In meditation, naturally, the ego-sense dissolves when you identify yourself with the Divine within you. Your body-consciousness is lost and you enjoy complete ecstasy. Some people, after a successful meditation, fight shy of action for fear that the sense of doership might seize them and the pairs of opposites might come up and disturb their equilibrium. Therefore, in external life you should ascribe all the movements of your senses, mind and intellect to the universal Shakti. Cultivate this way of approach so that you may keep away the ego-sense even when you are engaged in work. Otherwise, even small actions will bring back the ego-sense and instantly your

equanimity is lost. When you are awake and active as well as during meditation — in all states of consciousness — you must be utterly free from the ego-sense.

It is not by calculation, affirmation or intellectual acceptance we can attain that supreme realization. It is a state of super-consciousness attained through continuous remembrance of God. If we are to keep up this remembrance always, we should be humble — 'I am a servant. You are the master. You direct me and I do things. Your command is supreme for me. It is you who make me see, talk, eat, walk, give, receive — all movements are by your power, by your will.' This sense of separation or relationship as between master and servant is maintained. We cannot wipe it out at once. We must approach Him in this spirit of surrender to His power or will. That requires naturally continuous remembrance. The moment we forget Him, the ego comes in. So we are asked to remember Him throughout day and night and keep the ego away, just as light dispels darkness and the moment the light goes off, darkness comes.

The remembrance must flow in our mind continuously like a stream of oil poured from one vessel to another, until the ego-sense totally disappears. Through illusion you think there is an ego. In Sanskrit, therefore, it is called Ahambhava or Ahankara — ego-sense. It is only a false notion. This can go only by the awareness of our real Self. The Truth is always there, but we have forgotten it. Remembrance makes us conscious of it. The awareness can be permanent by surrender to the divine power and will, side by side with meditation by which we lose ourselves in the Self. By meditation, external surrender is made possible; and by external

surrender, meditation becomes easy. They help each other. They must go together because we have to live in the world; work and move in the world. If we are called upon to live only in solitude, then meditation is the only way. Even then, to look after the body we have to do some work such as procuring food, walking, stretching our hands, etc. Even in that the ego-sense may come up and say, 'I have brought some food. I have eaten. I gave away something.' This 'I-ness' again will impinge on us. Mental balance will be upset. Therefore we must feel, 'I am doing nothing.'

During the first year of his wandering life, Ramdas was acting, being actuated by a mysterious force that had taken possession of him. So the external surrender was complete even then, and he had no experience of a state of Samadhi for a year. He was simply chanting God's name and God was guiding him from place to place. When he returned to Kadri cave, one day he sat with eyes closed in a particular posture. The moment he sat still he was lost in a trance. He remained for hours together unaware of the world or body, immersed in perfect bliss and peace. Cravings for worldly things had disappeared. These cravings draw our mind outward and make meditation impossible. Therefore it is said we must have no attachment, no hankerings, no desire for worldly things. Then the mind will go inward easily and lose itself completely. In that state we attain the awareness of the Self.

The mind is going out during meditation because it still has attraction for external things. Therefore Vairagya has been prescribed as the means for successful Abhyasa. Ramdas was virtually in that wonderful state of mind, dead to the world. The world never

existed for him, so to say. His eyes were only half-open because he had no desire to see anything. He had no anxiety. The mind was attuned to Ramnam and so when he sat for meditation after a year's wandering life, there was no struggle. Many sit for meditation and find that the mind is distracted. They are unable to quell the waves of the mind. They cannot maintain inner awareness for long. Ramdas had no such struggle at all because he was already dead to the world. The mind did not wander here and there. He had no attachment or longing for the objects of life. So in Kadri cave his mind dissolved the moment he sat down for meditation. This was a new experience when he lost completely the body-consciousness and became illumined within and united with the Divine. Then he knew what real bliss and peace was.

Ramnam kept in check the activities of the mind, especially those activities that made it run after external objects. Afterwards the mind was so calm that it would not go out even when the chanting stopped.

Ramdas' body underwent many hardships in unfavourable conditions, but they never affected him because he was mostly oblivious of the body. He would sit anywhere, rest anywhere. Sometimes he had starved. He could now remember how he was moving from place to place. It was really a strange state.

When Ramdas was in Rishikesh he met many Sadhus living in Kutis. When the bell rang we used to go together to the Anna Kshetra for Bhiksha. One elderly man asked Ramdas, 'How did you get this joy?'

Ramdas: God gave him.

Sadhu: How is it He does not give us? What Sadhana did you do?

Ramdas: Ramnam.

Sadhu: We are also doing it. We do not get this joy. When did you get this?

Ramdas: Only a year ago. He is filled with joy.

Sadhu: How was it caused?

Ramdas: God caused it.

That was the language in which Ramdas spoke to them, and today also he can only say, 'It is all by God's will.'

Then another Sannyasi said, 'I have been here for thirty years. Everyday I bathe in the Ganges, practise meditation and take my Bhiksha from the Anna Kshetra. The bad food causes indigestion and other troubles. I often go to the hospital and take medicines, and the mind is never at rest. I am running about in this way. Thirty years have elapsed and I have achieved nothing. I have left my home, wife and children. I have burnt my boats and the future is dark.'

If any Sadhu in one of the Kutis dies, when the others come to know of it, they say, 'He is saved, he has not died. He was undergoing so much suffering. That is now over.' In that manner they would congratulate him on his death which had put an end to his miseries. There are many to whom death is a merciful release.

They think if one goes to the four Dhamas, viz., Badri, Rameshwar, Dwarka and Jagannath Puri, and visit the shrines there, one will attain Mukti. That is the belief. One of the Sadhus was too old to go on a

pilgrimage any longer. He had installed an image of Badrinarayana and was worshipping it. He said, 'I had been to Badrinath ten times and I got nothing. I am spending my time now in worshipping the image.' His back was bent with age.

Ramdas met innumerable Sadhus during his tours. They were all grumbling that they had achieved nothing. How is it God singled Ramdas out and granted him His grace? It was grace, grace and nothing but grace. In his earlier life there was nothing remarkable about his devotion to God. He lived like ordinary men of the world without any keen longing or devotion for God. At one period of his life he was even a sceptic. He read some books written by scientists of the West. They tried to prove that there was no God and that God was a figment of the imagination of the people who were mentally weak or unbalanced. So when he read a book called 'Evolution of the idea of God' by a scientist who sought to prove by arguments that there was no God, it undermined his faith in God.

But later he came into contact with the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda and Swami Rama Tirtha. Then he regained the lost faith. Two or three years before Ramdas left Mangalore on his wandering life, he was attracted greatly by Swami Rama Tirtha's works. He was talking only about him to friends. He learnt by heart portions from his speeches and sayings. He was also courting the company of saints and Sadhus and attending Harikatha performances. He was thus drawn to the life of devotion to God and later he was caught in the grip of Sadhana of repeating God's name day and night. Sense pleasures lost all glamour for him. He was praying for God-

madness. God made him ask for it and He granted it. In that state he gave up everything of the world and went away regardless of consequences. He had no idea of what was in store for him. He had no plans when he left Mangalore and travelled far and wide.

During this period Ramdas was going from place to place by railway train without tickets. Some people object to this mode of travel — 'Is it not against railway rules, against moral principles?' Ramdas did not know moral proprieties. Do you know why he travelled without ticket? The Sadhus who were escorting him took him to the station. He was sitting with them in the train. They had no tickets. 'Come on; come on,' they would say and make him sit by their side in the railway compartment. The Ticket Collector would come and say, 'Get down, get down.' No disappointment was felt by Ramdas. He had no programme to reach any place at any particular time. Two days or twenty days, it did not matter to him. He was quite free wherever he was — station, road or anywhere. He was absorbed in the repetition of Ramnam.

Two years ago a friend came here. He was in the railway service and was devoted to us. Ramdas had met him in the Punjab. He said, 'Papa, my conscience pricks me that you travelled in the railway trains one or two years without tickets. That means you owe the Railway Company some money. I feel like paying the Company and freeing you from that obligation. Can you find out how much it may come to?' Ramdas said, 'He has not at all any idea of it.' 'I am prepared to pay whatever it is,' he said. He was an honest man who had at one time held a high executive post in the Railways and also had plenty of money. He was ready to pay

any amount to the Railway Company on behalf of Ramdas. Then Ramdas put him the question, 'If you are going to reimburse the amount, it means that Ramdas was wrong in having travelled in that manner. You have to accept that and then make the payment.' He replied, 'No. You were not wrong. I felt the money might be paid.' Ramdas said, 'All right, you may pay it but Ramdas does not know how much.' Then the friend abandoned the idea of payment. Ramdas was not at all conscious he did anything wrong. He was moving about like one completely free from all obligations. He never thought of cheating the Company. In that spirit he wandered. Now Ramdas does not go without a ticket.

21st February, 1961.

Q : A friend in Bangalore, who is a Sanskrit scholar and who has written several books, has written to me to ask you as to how and when our Vasanas would be completely destroyed.

Ramdas : By surrendering to God and by beholding Him everywhere. Unless you have the universal vision, desires are not completely destroyed. Individuality must cease. So long as individuality persists, Vasanas will persist. That means you must realize the Self. That is the only condition by fulfilling which desires are eradicated. It is called Vasana Kshaya.

Scholarship is not enough. Quoting from books and delivering discourses will not do. You must attain universal vision through the knowledge of the Self, because the Self is all-pervading. Then, as the ego disappears, there is no room in you for desires to persist.

They vanish automatically. Ego-sense is a great obstacle. It can go by continuous remembrance of God, which brings about surrender and universal vision. Desires are born of duality. When duality ceases, desires cease as a matter of course. Fear is also born of duality. When there is nobody other than yourself, there is none to be afraid of.

Q : How to digest all that Papa says?

Ramdas: When you are suffering from indigestion you take some tablet for digestion. Ramnam is the tablet. If you take it you will digest what Ramdas tells you. Ramnam gives you purity which is an essential condition for assimilating the truths. For Sravana you must have Adhikara, which means fitness to receive and retain the spiritual advice given by those who have realized God. So preparation is necessary on your part. Repetition of Ramnam will enable you to become fit to listen to it, retain what you have heard, and assimilate it. The necessary purity and concentration is achieved by taking Ramnam.

When you sit before a sage who is unfolding the truth of the Self, you will not be able to benefit by what you hear if your mind is wandering. You must have a concentrated and purified mind. Ramnam will give you this. Unless you are interested in the subject, you cannot sit there for long, and you do not wish to hear about the Atman or God-realization. In the Gita it is said, you must approach a saint, put questions to him regarding your doubts and get them cleared by his instructions. You are also asked to serve him in all humility. Humility is the necessary condition for receiving instructions from the saint. After you have

heard his advice you must try your best to put it into practice. If you are not able to do so, you must ask him to give you the necessary strength. If you depend upon him you will find that you are able to do Sadhana without your making any effort in that direction, and you will feel that he himself, from within you, is giving you the required initiative, steadiness, faith and concentrated application.

When the Guru gave Ramdas the Ram Mantra, he told him, 'If you chant this Mantra always you will attain everlasting joy.' After receiving the Mantra Ramdas started chanting it as instructed by the Guru. He could not do any other work thereafter. Most of his time was spent in chanting the Mantra. Then people asked him, 'Is that all the teaching that you have received from the Guru? Did you not ask him any other question?' There was no other question to be asked until Ramdas first put into practice what he was asked to do. The first lesson we must learn well before we proceed to the second lesson. That lesson he was trying to put into practice. After that he found there were no questions left to be asked. All doubts dissolved, all questions disappeared and what the Guru promised he got by chanting the Mantra. The aspiration of everyone is to get happiness — real, lasting happiness; and that goal was reached by chanting Ramnam. Then there was nothing left to be attained and so there were no questions to be asked at all.

When he was chanting Ram Mantra God took him out of Mangalore on a wandering life. In the course of his wanderings he went to Ramana Maharshi. There too he did not ask any question. He stood before him and prayed only for grace. And grace was granted,

not by talk but by look. Ramdas left that place and came to Siddharudha Math. There he got the Darshan of the sage, did Pranams to him and sat before him, especially during the morning and afternoon Parayana. Ramdas had no doubts to be cleared, no questions to ask. In the course of the reading, Siddharudha Swami in some connection said, 'You see, we have to realize the Truth not merely for our own sake, but we must see that by our contact and influence, others also get a push towards the realization of God. It is not enough if we enjoy peace ourselves, but we must share it also with others.'

At that time Ramdas was moving from place to place like one gone mad, in a state of divine intoxication. Ramnam was on his tongue ceaselessly. He had hardly any sleep in the nights. Food was reduced to the minimum so that he might not get into Tamasic mood. Then came the universal vision, when the inner illumination was complete through repetition of Ramnam and the contact and grace of saints. Thereafter the mind ceased to trouble him because the mind itself ceased to be, and with the mind all Vasanas disappeared. When you attain universal vision, the entire individuality ceases. You see the universe as the expression of the Self or Atman. Atman is nameless and formless. The universe is with names and forms. So the universe is the manifest and the Atman the unmanifest. Actually they are both one and the same. This is a mystery which you cannot explain in words or grasp with the mind.

We can keep Vasanas under control temporarily. We cannot entirely destroy them without the grace of saints or Guru. We attain Jnana when the mind disappears with all its desires. Thereafter there is no

Sadhana necessary for self-control, because there is no mind. We live in a natural state. It is called Sahaja.

When you attain to the Sahaja state, there is nothing left for you to do. That is the end of all Sadhanas. That is the Siddha Avastha, which means the state of spiritual perfection. You have nothing more to attain. Worldly desires are replaced by desire for Jnana or liberation. When liberation is achieved, that desire also disappears. Then you are perfectly desireless. That is your normal state. When you are desiring things and running here and there in pursuit of them you are in an abnormal state.

Till we reach the Sahaja state we are, as it were, in a diseased condition. Ignorance is the disease which has made the soul bound and miserable. Health returns when we know that we are the Self. Otherwise we think we are the body. Identification with the body and the senses gives rise to duality. Then comes the dual throng and you are caught up in the Gunas and Dwandwas like praise and blame, honour and dishonour, etc. You have forgotten or ignored your real nature which is the eternal, infinite Self. You think you are a body subject to birth, decay, disease and death though you are the immortal, changeless Spirit. Instead of identifying yourself with the Atman, you identify yourself with the body and the result is pain, misery, anxiety and death. Thus runs the prayer in the Upanishads:

असतो मा मद्रमय
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय
मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय

‘Lead me from the unreal to the Real.
 Lead me from darkness to Light.
 Lead me from death to Immortality.’

Such a soul who has realized the pristine glory of his immortal Self is happy and cheerful at all times. Sorrow and death cannot touch him. He has conquered death and will bravely face it without flinching.

An American writer who has studied the life and works of the great Teachers of the world belonging to different religions, has come to the conclusion that there are six characteristics common to all those who have realized God and attained to the highest spiritual eminence. They are:

Awareness of immortality.
 Absence of the sense of sin.
 Perfect fearlessness.
 Consciousness of a new birth.
 Eternal bliss and peace.
 Gentle and attractive nature.

Such men who have achieved this glorious realization or experience are indeed a blessing to humanity, and are very rare.

बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते ।
 वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

‘After many births a soul attains Jnana.
 Very rare is that Mahatma who realizes
 everything is Vasudeva.’

In the fire of Jnana all desires are burnt up. The advent of light means destruction of darkness. In the same way when the light of the Atman shines within you, the darkness of ignorance disappears automatically.

It is said, even if desires disappear from the mind they persist in the body. They have to be ejected from the body as well by throwing the light of the Atman into every part of it. First Mano Siddhi, then Kaya Siddhi. He who wants all-round perfection should see to it that the body also is freed from all desires. In a sense the body also is divinized. Divinization does not mean making it immortal, but allowing the light of the Atman to pervade the entire body, rooting out from the nook and corner of it the last vestige of desire.

Q: Even when the mind is destroyed, do desires stay in the body?

Ramdas: Jnanis sometimes lead a married life and even have children, because in their case desires lurk in the body and they allow them free play. But there are some who do not want to live such a life. They want to spiritualize the body also and free it from all desires.

Q: Then which is the seat of desires for them?

Ramdas: Senses are the seat of desires when the mind does not function. After the mind is destroyed, the desires take refuge in the body — not in Jnana-indriyas, but in Karma-indriyas. Jnanis will not be affected, it is believed, even if they marry and have children. Atman is the witness of Prakriti. Atman is not responsible for the actions of the body. But some Self-realized souls do not approve of that way. They aim at absolute purity to such an extent that their action becomes an outflow of divine energy. It is not true to say that action is not possible without desire. Action can be there without desire. For the sake of Lila, Divine Shakti is creating, preserving and destroying

things. Desire is in Apra Prakriti. But the Prakriti of the Self-realized soul is Para Prakriti and is desireless and therefore their actions are spontaneous. The seat of desire is mind. The mind is dead, but what about the body? Body also must be pure, illumined, blissful. In that state, every action gives you joy — walking, sitting, talking, moving your hands — because all movements are of bliss. Water standing still is water; water in motion is also water. Purusha in motion is Prakriti. One is not different from the other. The body is the expression of the Atman. So it must be of the same nature as the Atman; only it is dynamic. So all movements of the body are movements of bliss or Ananda. 'Sarvam Khalvidam Brahman.' Everything is verily Brahman. That with name and form and that without name and form, manifest and unmanifest — all is Brahman.

22nd February, 1961.

Q: Papa said that a Jnani can marry and have children. I just want to know how a Jnani can be expected to come down to such a low level and still remain unaffected.

Ramdas: Several Rishis of old were married. Vasishtha, Yajnavalkya and Janaka are instances. Kabir, Eknath and Tukaram were married and had children, and they are considered to be great saints. 'Going up' and 'going down' are not for them. That is only for the ignorant, the Ajnani.

Q: Is it after marriage they became Jnanis, or is it after attaining Jnana they got married?

Ramdas: Even after attaining Jnana, married life is not in any way considered objectionable. There

are some who never married and there are some who married and after some time lived a strict celibate life just like Gandhiji, who in his later life looked upon his wife as mother. He was then free from all sex desire — he had conquered it. Buddha before enlightenment married and had a son. Sri Ramakrishna married but he had nothing to do with his partner as a wife. There are various types of Jnanis and there is no uniformity in their lives. But all of them have realized the same Truth.

Ramdas thinks that for full expression of divinity, married life is incompatible. Married life connotes sex-relation with the wife. So far as Ramdas is concerned he can say that such a life and Self-realization do not go together. Sex desire should be sublimated completely in the Jnanis and they should become like children — innocent, guileless, free from all desires of the senses. There should be no compromise in this. That kind of life does not appeal to Ramdas.

If some saints had children, it might be before they attained Jnana. Ramdas was fighting against lust in the early days of his Sadhana. That is the problem also with all Sadhakas. It is not merely continence by mind control; it is complete elimination of sex-desire. It is realization of Brahman. Then only you are a true Brahmachari. In that state your mind becomes extinct. In the early stages it may be a matter of control through concentration, but when you have realized Brahman, there is no question of control. You live in your natural state of Brahman. There cannot be any desire in you. Ramdas is emphatic on this point.

We are asked to conquer the desire for Kamini and Kanchana — woman and gold. There is nothing

wrong with woman and gold. The desire for them is in us. That desire should be renounced. A guileless nature and perennial cheerfulness are born of the absence of desire. So long as desires linger in your mind, you cannot have the consciousness of immortality and the resultant joy. Unless your vision is universalized after realizing the Self, this desire or any desire can never leave you. In the earlier stages desires will harass you. They will rise up however much you may try to overcome them. You may live in the Himalayas, but your mind will be running towards the home to which it was previously attached. It wanders and is restless because the seed of desire is still in you. You must struggle at first, but lastly you must leave the matter to God and He will crown your efforts with success.

24th February, 1961.

Ramdas: There are three types of persons. A man, being steeped in ignorance and caught in the clutches of his lower nature, sees only evil and not good in others. When persons do some wrong to him, he hates them and wreaks vengeance on them. Not only that. He gloats over their sufferings. Better type is he who forgives those who wrong him. He says, 'I forgive them because they have acted in ignorance. So I will not retaliate. On the other hand, if they are in trouble, I will help them'. In this case he recognizes the wrong done to him. Still higher type is he who does not take it ill in spite of untold trouble and deliberate injury inflicted on him. He does not see any wrong done to him. So the question of forgiveness does not arise.

There is an instance in the Puranas. When Bhrgu Maharshi for some reason kicked Lord Vishnu on the

chest, He instantly took his leg and began to massage it saying, 'How much pain this hard chest would have given to your soft lotus foot!' As this kick left a permanent mark on Lord Vishnu's chest, the mark earned the appellation, 'Bhrigu Lanchhana'. Similarly, saints, even when beaten, bear no ill-will towards the offenders, but on the contrary love and serve them.

5th March, 1961.

Ramdas: It is a divine quality to feel happy over the good fortune of others. One generally feels jealous of another's rise in official life, especially when it happens to be at one's cost. A college professor was deeply grieved when a junior, much less qualified than himself, was promoted, overlooking his own claims. When Ramdas was consulted, he advised him that he should feel delighted at the good luck of his junior and consider that God does everything for good.

Test comes to everyone of us in so many ways. Many people burn with jealousy and even go to the length of hating others who are prosperous. When a man is really illumined through surrender to the will of God, he will be satisfied with the state in which he finds himself. And very often when you are living a contented life, never grumbling, God showers on you His favours. Ramdas has found this to be true in his own experience.

In Bombay there is a young man who is not pretentious of his qualifications. He was getting a modest salary with which he was perfectly contented. He was a man of high intelligence all the same. Some people told him, 'Why are you working on such a low salary? If you apply to some other firm you may get more pay.'

He said, 'I am contented. I like to work here. Whatever they give me, I am satisfied'. Then his friends called him a fool. In a year he got an increment of Rs. 50. He was an ordinary reporter to a newspaper. After one or two years he got another Rs. 100, making his salary Rs. 300. He was doing his work selflessly, not caring what salary he was getting. And in another year he was appointed Chief Reporter. He is now getting Rs. 500. All along he has been saying, 'I never deserved this. I am not at all ambitious.' But God is showering His bounty on him because he is contented. Therefore, what is wanted is contentment. You may fight for the rights of others but not for your own. Otherwise you get into conflict and that makes you miserable. When you are miserable, all those who are around you also become miserable. Surrender denotes a life of perfect contentment. A man of surrender has no prayers to make to God for himself. He is perfectly satisfied with what God has given him. He is ever peaceful and happy.

You have therefore to surrender yourself to God. But many people do not know what surrender actually means. Verbal surrender will not do. Surrender must be of every part of your being — a total, integral, complete surrender. Your heart, mind, senses, body — all should be offered up to the Divine. Then you are guided by Him from within and you act as He wills. You are happy whatever be the circumstances in which you are placed.

Q: Can such a surrender be equated with realization?

Ramdas: Through surrender you reach perfect peace and happiness. When the ego-sense disappears you realize that you are the Self. This is the approach to Self-realization. Be happy in all your life. A Sadhu who aims at Self-realization, thinks: 'This place is not suited to me.' In vain he goes about all over India in search of an ideal spot. Similarly some disgruntled people go on changing jobs. They do not gain anything. You must have a change in your outlook. Till then you are not satisfied. Happiness and misery are states of mind. If you realize that you are the Self, no external condition will disturb your inner calmness. Look at Ramdas' life. He was clothed in rags. He was lying sometimes on the roadside. Still he was enjoying supreme happiness. Even monarchs and emperors would envy him. They could not dream of getting that happiness which he was enjoying in that state of abject destitution. So where is happiness then? It is not in wealth, glory, name and fame, or external paraphernalia. No wonder India is teaching the world, 'You can get peace and joy by inner renunciation of all desires for external things.'

Many people think that by accumulating things they will be happy. On the contrary, they become more and more miserable. If you seek comfort in position and acquisition, you will be disillusioned. No doubt, you have to take care of the body and not neglect it. When you leave things entirely to God, He will even look after it. In Ramdas' case, God in the form of Sadhus took care of him. One thing is true, the body must be forgotten before you can realize the Atman. If you are too much attached to the body, your mind will be thinking only of the body. So sages disappear

into the forests and in meditation remain above body-consciousness and live in perfect bliss in the knowledge of Satchidananda.

‘Rejoice in the good fortune of others.’ Somehow Ramdas, in his early life, was rejoicing when others got something more than he. He was examining himself if he had even a trace of jealousy in him. He did not want respect from anybody. What is the meaning of craving for worldly name or fame? ‘Desire for name and fame is the last infirmity of noble minds.’

There was a devotee who was daily giving alms to Sadhus. Every day ten or twelve Sadhus would come and receive rice, dal, etc., from him. His son told him one day, ‘I wish to have a Guru. I want to select a saint from among these Sadhus to be my Guru.’ The father agreed. ‘How can I find out who is the saint among them, capable of guiding me spiritually?’ asked the son. ‘I will tell you,’ said the father. ‘From tomorrow you will have to give alms. While giving, show some displeasure instead of joy.’ He did accordingly and the Sadhus, except one, grumbled and said, ‘What a fellow he is! He does not give alms with love. He gives it as if he were conferring a favour on us.’ Next day he used strong words, ‘What is the meaning of your coming everyday for alms?’ and gave alms as usual. The Sadhus felt hurt and the next day only five of them turned up. In four or five days only one turned up; all others stayed away. He scolded him in these words: ‘You are a perfect fool. Even after my scolding you so many times you are coming.’ Next day again that Sadhu came. He was rebuked all the same and given alms. For ten days the Sadhu’s patience was tried in that way. But he remained unperturbed. When he came again

for alms, the father who was observing all this, told his son, 'Son, this is the Sadhu who has risen above praise and blame. He has the qualities of a saint. Fall at his feet. Accept him as your Guru.' That is the nature of saints. They do not care whether you speak well or ill of them.

6th March, 1961.

Ramdas: Ramdas will read out an article 'Lalita and Psychotherapy' published in the Vedanta Kesari of February, 1961.

'.....The results of chanting sacred hymns are more powerful. By chanting hymns, powerful clockwise vibrations are generated which go to completely neutralise the anti-clockwise vibrations arising from the unconscious mind. One of such sacred hymns is the Lalita Sahasranama. There is no mental complex or psychic confusion which is not removed by chanting this hymn.....'

Such vibrations are produced even when you are chanting any Mantra — what you call the Siddha Mantra, by which perfection has been attained by sages. Such Mantras are generally used in India, e.g., Maha Mantra — Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare; Vasudeva Mantra — Om Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya; Siva Mantra — Om Namah Sivaya; Rama Mantra — Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram. All these Mantras have intrinsic power in them and when you chant them continuously they create in you harmonious vibrations. Your disturbed mind becomes calm and serene. Even diseases in the body disappear. Inharmonious vibrations in the body cause ailments.

The chanting of the Mantra brings in balanced vibrations and removes all distempers. First it must be applied to control and harmonize the mind. You must be filled with divine harmony. By chanting the Mantra you will see that discordant vibrations give place to harmonious vibrations. Irritability, bad thoughts, distractions, all disappear. Your wild nature is tamed. All selfish desires and instincts are subdued. You become a completely changed person.

Some years ago, a lady came here alone from a far off place. She was a widow. Her face was red. Her temper was bad. She was active and efficient. She came here, a perfect stranger to us. 'What brought you here?' asked Ramdas. She replied, 'I read your monthly magazine, The Vision. Then I had a vision in which somebody told me to go forthwith to Anandashram. I at once asked for a month's leave and have come here.' 'What is the purpose of your coming here?' asked Ramdas. She said, 'Don't know, The vision I had, brought me here.' We then asked her to stay here for the period of her leave. She said, 'I have not come for nothing; I want to be initiated with the Ram Mantra.' The Mantra was given and she started repeating it. She was sitting in the nights for meditation. During the day she used to move about restlessly. Her mind was of the type described in the article, having complexes of mental cobwebs which bring about a kind of psychic confusion or irritable temper. After about fifteen days she said to Ramdas, 'I have again a vision directing me to go back to my place.' Accordingly she returned home. But she went back a changed woman. Her restlessness had disappeared. She was quiet and calm. This was noticed by her companions at the place of her work.

After about four months she again came here with some of them. They who were once having a bad time at her hands bore witness to her changed temperament and behaviour. They said, 'What an irritable woman she was! How quiet she is now!' She would sit in one place for hours together, her mind filled with Ramnam. We noticed it. The rhythm of the Mantra acted on her sub-conscious mind and stopped all distractions, irritability and disturbed emotions rising from it.

So the Mantra has got its intrinsic value. You will find how soothing it is to the mind when it is sung in a particular tune continuously. The mind is filled with strange vibrations which produce calmness and serenity. This is not the case only with Lalita Sahasranama, but with every Mantra. If you chant it by yourself you will find that its effect on the mind is marvellous. So when some people are ill, we ask them to repeat the Mantra. They get well. That is also how by the touch of a saint diseases are cured. He is like a powerful dynamo. He brings about an immediate change in the condition of the ailing body from disharmony to harmony. His mere touch has cured fevers and other maladies. The secret is, the saint is the embodiment of a divine Mantra — Mantra Swarupa.

These Mantras must be used for quelling the waves of the mind, not merely for curing the ailments of the body. Let the diseases of the mind be cured first. Leave the body in the hands of Nature or administer to it simple remedies. Health or no health, try to forget the body. Don't waste your time on the body because if one disease goes out another comes in. Ignorance, the disease of the mind, must go, bringing the mind into perfect harmony with the Spirit within.

Sri Ramakrishna was suffering from cancer in the throat. 'Why don't you cure yourself?' his devotees asked. He said, 'I do not remember the body itself; what to say of cancer?' The wandering mind was not there. He lived in a perfectly natural state in which body-consciousness was absent. Even if it was there, it was only slight, for talking, walking etc.

There are three types of Siddhas or perfected souls. They are: Unmatta, Pishacha and Bala. The Unmatta is so deeply immersed in God-consciousness that he is indifferent to the world and its affairs. The Pishacha behaves like a ghou, quite uncontrolled and wild in his behaviour. He will abuse, shout, beat people and go about like a mad man. The third type — Bala — is like a child, always playful, gentle, happy and cheerful.

Ramdas met an Unmatta in Mangalore during his early Sadhana days. The Sadhu was found sitting and resting under trees, detached from the world. He would eat food only when offered. Mischievous boys used to pelt stones at him and he simply smiled at them. Ramdas once took him home, fed him and persuaded him to remain with him for some days. He had a well-built body and was of a fair complexion.

We have also read about an Unmatta in the Life of Sri Ramakrishna, who came to Dakshineswar. When asked for spiritual instructions, he told a Sadhaka that he would attain Jnana when he saw no difference between Ganges water and gutter water. Ramdas is also reminded of a naked Sadhu he met in Chitrakut. He was observing silence. Ramdas has made a reference about him in his early talks.

When Ramdas was at Jhansi, a Swami from Chitrakut came down to see him. When he was coming along the road towards the place where Ramdas was residing, somebody told him 'In that Mandir is a Sadhu. You may see him first. Afterwards you can go and see Ramdas.' He thought it was a good opportunity to see a Mahatma. As he stepped inside the Mandir, the Sadhu abused him in the wildest terms. He got nothing but abuse from him. He took the abuses all right and came to Ramdas. Ramdas saw him from a distance. As soon as he came near, we embraced each other. Then he said, 'I had a vision of Rudra over there, now I am having the vision of Vishnu. It is a great relief for me. That Sadhu was about to beat me. I left that place at once. How cooling is this embrace!'

Some Sadhus are violent. They even pelt stones, and devotees run for their lives. But the anger of saints is always short-lived. Mysterious are their ways. At Akalkot there was a saint. He had a large following. He would abuse people coming to see him. His devotees used to take the abuses as blessings. If on any day they were not abused, they would say, 'Why has he not abused us today? What a misfortune!'

At Ajmer there was a naked Sadhu called Dada Dhuniwala, so named because he had a Dhuni in front of him. Whatever he got he would throw into that fire. He had a small stick. If anybody prostrated before him, he would give him or her a good blow on the head. It would cause injury and bleeding also. The person would take it as a blessing and go away. People suffering from fever or any other disease would also go to him. They too were given the beating and were rid of their diseases. Thousands were going to

him for Darshan. On Sundays alone he did not make use of the stick. The place where he lived was at one time a poor and sparsely populated village. Due to the Mahatma, later a township grew up there. So some people in a village nearby wanted their village also to flourish. They planned to take the Sadhu bodily to their village. The people in the township got scent of this and kept guard on him so that he might not be kidnapped. Now he has passed away.

Such are the eccentricities of some saints. Still they have got followers in thousands. Sai Baba also used to fall foul of the people who went to him. Even after his physical disappearance he is said to perform miracles. Disciples of Sai Baba will tell you many stories of miracles he performed in their own cases. Inscrutable are the ways of saints. That is all we can say. We should not sit in judgement upon them.

Ramdas met a Sadhu at Rishikesh in the first year of his wandering life. Ramdas used to stay under a tree. In front of the tree there was a small hut in which the Sadhu lived. He was of fair complexion. His eyes were greenish and twinkling. He was wearing simple dress. Ramdas saw him in the morning, driving away crows. While they flew away he would leap and laugh. It was a joy to see him running after the crows. He was truly childlike in his nature. Sri Ramakrishna may also be classed among the Siddhas of the Bala type. Once when Sri Ramakrishna fell down while in a state of trance, and broke his arm, the arm was put under plaster and a sling, and he used to have pain also. Whenever anybody went to him, he would ask, 'When will this be cured?' He was like a child — simple, innocent, guileless and pure in nature.

7th March, 1961.

Q : Will you kindly speak of the method and purpose of concentration and meditation? I have not got a clear idea of it.

Ramdas: Ramdas is not speaking now about concentration and meditation as given in books, in which you will find many methods prescribed. Ramdas' experience is entirely different. He had not to struggle for concentration or meditation. These things came to him naturally because when he started on the spiritual path, he had, first of all, intense Vairagya. So the mind was not roaming about in pursuit of pleasures of the world. And secondly, he was from the very start engaged in the chanting of God's name. He was doing it orally first, and afterwards the mind took it up. He was chanting OM SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM slowly in a particular tune. He concentrated his mind on the sound of the Name. His love for God was so great that the sound of the Name was very sweet to his ears. The result was that the mind refused to wander about but was absorbed in the Name and he rose partially above body-consciousness. In that state he roamed all over India, but did not know then what concentration or meditation as such was.

After a year he came back and occupied the Panch Pandav cave in Kadri at Mangalore. On a month's stay there, somehow an urge came from within to sit for meditation. He had heard and read about it, but did not practise it according to the instructions given in the books. One night when he sat up with eyes closed in a particular Asana, he at once lost consciousness of the body completely and was immersed in an ocean

of bliss. He felt he was bliss itself. He remained in that condition for nearly three hours.

People say that we must first concentrate the mind upon some object; after concentration is fully achieved we should start meditation upon the qualities or attributes of the Divine within. Then we get lost in Him and we rise above body idea. We then experience a state of trance or Samadhi. No such process was gone through by Ramdas. Repetition of God's name was the only Sadhana he did for the first two years. He never sat for concentration or meditation. Repetition of Ramnam did everything that was required in the shape of Sadhana. Whenever he sat still, he was lost in God. Even thereafter he was chanting God's name and it sounded so sweet that it became a habit with him and he used to get into ecstasies by chanting it. That was all he did. This is not the prescribed method; you do not know whether you can call it a method at all. Chanting the Name for two years produced a state of super-consciousness, in which the body was forgotten. That was an experience of pure bliss and peace. Its nature is eternal and infinite.

If Ramdas tells people that he achieved the goal by following this way as enjoined upon him by God, they do not believe him. They say, 'Name we are also repeating, but we do not get the result which you got. Repetition of God's name must be different with different people.' The mind is not prepared to accept the Name as the sole means to attain God, if practice is not backed up with sufficient Vairagya. A distracted mind cannot enjoy the bliss of the Name. Vairagya is the outcome of a keen, one-pointed aspiration for realizing God. Then the Name will work wonders. All impurities of

the mind will vanish and you will gain perfect tranquillity and peace. When the mind is still and serene, then God within reveals Himself and you become aware of His presence. Therefore the repetition of God's name as practised by Prahlada and Dhruva is considered quite different from the repetition practised in the world by many people. By repeating Ramnam in this way devotees get absorbed in God at once. Many do the repetition but without result, because the mind wanders; they have neither Vairagya nor a keen longing or thirst for God.

Q : Papa read just now that even if the mind is wandering, repetition of Ramnam will bear fruit.

Ramdas: That means, in course of time, you will get concentration. There are many who cannot do even such repetition in the early stages. If they persist, gradually the mind will take up the Name and automatically the restlessness and the impurities of the mind will disappear.

Certain conditions have to be fulfilled before you can take the Name and derive the fullest benefit by repeating it. God must provide the conditions. We cannot create them. Ramdas was repeating Ramnam even before he got initiation from his Guru. But at that time he did not have full control over his mind. After initiation the mind at once became calm. For fear of the mind going out of control, he was continuously repeating the Name. He did not want the mind to be running about like a monkey. Repetition never stopped. He gave up sleep and reduced food to the minimum so that he could chant the Name all the twentyfour hours. He could not attend to any other

work at that time. He did not want the mind to slip away from the Name. He was afraid, if he took more food, he might feel a kind of laziness; he might be overcome by sleep and forget the Name. He was always vigilant. He never found himself drowsy and listless. That means he was tremendously earnest in the quest of God. And that earnestness was granted to him by God. Otherwise, how is it, he had no such longing for Him before? This aspiration for God seized him by His grace alone and He created the necessary conditions for ceaseless remembrance of Him. Ramdas had done nothing to deserve His grace. Suddenly it gripped him. Thereafter he was living only for God — no ambition, no aspiration, no craving for anything else.

8th March, 1961.

Ramdas: In taking Ramnam you think you are taking the name of a deity living in some far-off heaven. But you are really repeating the name of your own immortal Self, that is, Atma Ram. You do not know that you are Ram. So you must ceaselessly remember Him until you are awakened to the consciousness that you are Ram yourself. How can you remove forgetfulness? By continuous remembrance of the Atman until you know that you are the Atman. Suppose there is a purse containing money in your pocket and you have forgotten about it. When you recollect it, you put your hand in the pocket and it is there. So remembrance gives you awareness. It is already there. You were ignorant of it; you had forgotten about it. Forgetfulness can be removed by remembrance; ignorance by awareness or knowledge.

So you are repeating the name of your own immortal, infinite, eternal Self. Do not take the Name thinking that the Name is of one who is far away from you, of one who is other than you. Know that you are taking your own name. Ram is a synonym for Self or Atman. You are already the Self. You can be conscious of your Self by constantly remembering the Self. Gradually the body-consciousness leaves you and you attain Jnana, which means knowledge of the Self. You cannot realize the all-comprehensive being of God unless you attain Jnana. That is the basis for knowing God as both Purusha and Prakriti. This grants you the vision of the world-lila in the state of Para-Bhakti. Bhakti is the root; Vairagya is the trunk; Jnana is the flower and Para-Bhakti is the fruit. In Para-Bhakti, Purusha and Prakriti are realized as one. Here Prakriti is not Mithya. God not only pervades the universe but transcends it to infinity. Being all the worlds, He is still beyond all limitations or boundaries — limitless expanse of divine existence.

What we have to free ourselves from is the illusion which makes us think we are the body. Then we will realize we are the Atman. For example, when a man is asleep we gently move his limbs to bring him back to wakefulness, and after waking up he becomes aware of himself. You are under an illusion. You have only to wake up and be aware of the Atman which you really are. How simple and how easy! Long, protracted and tedious Sadhana is not necessary. After all, you have not to gain anything new. You have only to know you are the Self.

There is another way. Go beyond or behind Nature. Be a witness of your body, senses and intellect

which comprise your nature. Then you will know that you are the Atman — the immortal. That too is simple. Dissociate yourself from the body; identify yourself with the Atman. We live and act in the belief that we are the body. Let us live in the world as before, but not considering ourselves to be the body. Movements do remain, but you know that you are the Self. You have a body and that body is active. You are the inactive Atman witnessing the actions of your Prakriti. Many people think that if the ego disappears, the body will cease to function. That is wrong. You cannot stop the activities of your nature. Creation, preservation and destruction — these three movements of the same power will be going on in the universe. But who are you? You are not the body which is perishable, changing; you are the immortal Atman, birthless and deathless, and therefore changeless. Know that you are the Self and then be active. What is the point in saying, 'You should be active?' You cannot but be active. The Divine Shakti ever acts in and through you so long as the body lasts.

10th March, 1961.

Ramdas: Ramdas has been taught by Ram that whatever feeling or thought rises in him is from Him. It is not only this thought or that. There is no such thing as sorting, as they do in the case of grains, paddy, etc. Everything is divine; every thought, every feeling directly emanates from Him. So Ramdas is under His guidance, His protection, and so long as duality is maintained Ramdas is a child or servant and God is Mother or Master. Inwardly there is no difference at all, externally duality is kept up for the sake of Lila. Essentially all are one. God is Akhanda, indivisible.

When two persons come to a clash regarding their views, both sides differ apparently, but the views have come from the same source. The clash belongs to the play. At heart it is Love that works. In manifestation God is Love. Whatever is done is done by Him. At the bottom there is love even in killing. Saints alone can understand this language. They teach us that there is no evil. Divine love is not the opposite of hate. It is absolute. It has no opposite at all. Everything happens by the will of that Love. There cannot be anything evil. Evil is only in the concept of man. In all cases it is so.

Saints go to the length of saying, if anybody abuses them, 'No, no, he has not abused us at all. It is his language of love,' and feel happy over it. You can see that their heart is pure gold. You cannot have that heart for the mere asking. It is not like picking a stone on the roadside. What a grand thing it is to be a saint of that attainment! A reverent study of their lives, ways and teachings is in itself a great Sadhana. Instead of reading philosophical discourses, read the lives of saints. Cherish the highest ideals presented to us in their lives—their renunciation, their unselfishness, their love for all beings and creatures, and their compassion towards all those who suffer. These qualities are wonderful. These come to you naturally in the wake of God-realization without your striving for them.

Go to the root of your existence. Realize your Self, then your whole life and outlook will be transformed. If we do not achieve this goal, we live a life no better than of animals. Usually our whole existence is centred in the ego. The ego is crystallized selfishness. We toil day and night in order to get something only for ourselves

and our kith and kin. Our vision is thus circumscribed. Outside that circle the world is not ours. So long as the ego is strong in us we cannot be happy. If we work, it must be for the good of all mankind. We have to universalize our vision. In that vision the ego is lost and we will then be truly happy.

Ramdas remembers the case of a man who came along with another to the Kasaragod Ashram to strangle Mataji. He pushed and threw her down causing her to fall on a copper vessel. The base of her spine was injured and the pain lasted for several years. Two years ago the man came to the Ashram here. He said he was one of the two persons who came to strangle her. He added that they had been incited to that course of action by some persons. As he made the confession he was stricken with remorse. Now, look at the attitude of Mataji! She treated the man with great love. She kept him in the Ashram for a week, gave him food and clothes, and also money for travelling expenses. He came again last year. 'I am coming for the last time,' he said and added that the other man had died. It is inconceivable that men of ordinary vision will ever help such a person in any way. 'I do not want to see his face,' they would say. Even at the moment this incident happened, Mataji said, 'They have not done me any great harm, for they have left me alive. Thereby they have done me a favour and I am grateful to them.'

If anybody abuses you, you naturally retaliate. If you do so you pave the way for future suffering. Therefore do not have enmity towards anybody. You suffer as a result of your own Karma. Your so-called enemy is only an instrumental cause. You should forgive him, not in petty things alone but when he has

even ruined your life. You must be ready to help him in his difficulties. Jesus Christ said, 'Love your enemies.' Buddha said, 'Return love for hate.' Once Jesus was asked, 'Suppose a person does me wrong; how many times should I forgive him; will seven times do?' 'No. No.' he said, 'Seventyseven times.' That means you should forgive him infinite number of times. Therefore it is said, 'To err is human and to forgive is divine.' When you develop the quality of forgiveness and are loving and compassionate towards your fellow-beings, you are revealing God in your heart. When anybody is in trouble and you help him out of it, what does he say? He says, 'God has come to my rescue.' Tukaram says, 'Where there is forgiveness, compassion and peace, there God dwells.' Surely, God is not for hard-hearted people.

Saints are tender-hearted, loving and kind. When you go to them laden with sorrows, their hearts melt and compassion flows towards you—not lip-deep sympathy. They lift the burden off your heart. Saints alone can do this. They are the real saviours. There may be a taint of selfishness even in a mother's love for her child, but there is no such taint in a saint's love. In the worldly sense, mother's love is considered to be the highest. But saint's love is far more sublime. Know this, your best well-wishers are the saints.

To achieve the blessed state of beholding the whole universe as God, and accepting God as our own, we may even abandon mother as Bharata did, give up father as Prahlada did, and renounce brother as Vibhishana did. By such wholehearted allegiance to God they raised themselves to the highest spiritual eminence. When we have the right to attain this blessed state, why should we live a cribbed, cabined and confined life? Our

Rishis teach us to universalize our vision by transcending the ideas of nation, creed, caste and race. 'I belong to the universe,'— what a grand privilege it is to declare so! That privilege we are denying ourselves. What a joy we will get when we identify ourselves with all creatures and beings in the world! That is freedom. That is Moksha. How we become thereby flaming instruments in the hands of God for the service and uplift of humanity!

When the mind is extinct you will have the universal vision born of the realization of the universal Truth — the Atman. In the first six chapters of the Gita, Arjuna is taught Jnana as the basis of an allround and integral realization. The next six chapters teach Bhakti. Here Arjuna is given the universal vision. Then the last six chapters speak of the divine power that works in the universe. Arjuna is asked to surrender to that Power and act for Lokasangraha. The first part is Jnana (Sankhya); the second is Para-Bhakti (Vedanta) and the last is Karma (Tantra). You become the embodiment of three Yogas — Jnana (head), Bhakti (heart) and Karma (body). The three parts of your being are fully imbued with light, love and power of God. Light is Jnana, Love is Bhakti and Power is Karma or physical action. Thus the Gita teaches the universal and all-comprehensive Yoga.

11th March, 1961.

Ramdas: Many years ago a drama was enacted in Kasaragod. The drama was 'Prahlada'. There was a large audience. The man who played the part of Hiranyakasipu was considered, at that time, a first-class actor. Prahlada was, of course, a small boy. He was chanting the name of Vishnu. His father objected

to this and said, 'I am everything. Why should you worship Vishnu?' He then began to harass the child. Hiranyakasipu played his part very well, and in the process the boy was pushed here and there and was kicked. Of course, that was all mere acting. In the audience there was a Muslim witnessing this. He got wild, jumped upon the stage and caught hold of Hiranyakasipu saying, 'Blackguard, you are tormenting that boy? I will teach you a lesson.' He was about to give him good blows. But immediately some people intervened and prevented a scuffle.

We forget that all of us are playing a part in the world-drama. Let us act our part well. We are not only to play our part, but also to witness it. You are God, playing a part; others are also God, playing their respective parts. 'All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances,' as Shakespeare puts it. It is perfectly right. When the stage manager says, 'Your time is up,' you go behind the curtain. But let us know it is a play and nothing more. We are in a Dharmashala where we, the travellers, stay for a while and then depart. There is nothing permanent here.

Q : Is our Sadhana to play the part well or simply to know that it is all a play?

Ramdas: You must know that you are playing a part. To know that is difficult. Sadhana must lead you to the knowledge of this truth. With all heart and soul you must do Sadhana. Then only you will get the experience that it is all the Lila of the Lord and you will play your part knowingly. Saints play their part cheerfully with the knowledge that it is all God's Lila.

A Sadhu was telling everybody who went to him, 'Everything is Mithya — money, home, wife, children; all is false.' But this is not the experience of ordinary persons. They feel hungry; so hunger is real. They have to work in the office and earn for maintaining the family. The family is real. But in the evenings when they went for Satsang, the Sadhu would say everything was false. They did not know whether they should take the Sadhu at his words or believe their own experiences. Once some four or five householders, who used to go for Darshan of the Sadhu and listen to his spiritual advice, joined together, caught hold of the Sadhu and threw him into a well. There was no water in the well. He began to cry out, 'Lift me up.' They said, 'Well is Mithya. Your falling into it is Mithya.' He cried out, 'It is not Mithya. Please lift me up.' Out of pity they took him out. 'Will you say that again?' they asked. He replied, 'Yes. Everything is Mithya. You lifted me out of the well; that is also Mithya.' Then they again dropped him into the well and went away. He was there the whole night. Next morning they came and asked him, 'What do you say now? Is everything Mithya?' 'I will not say that any more,' he promised. Then he was taken out, and from that time he stopped saying that everything is Mithya. He learnt a good lesson. It is easy to say that everything is Mithya, but to look upon everything as Mithya is difficult. Take it as Lila or play — an eternally changing play of the Lord. Instead of saying everything is Mithya, say it is Anitya — not permanent. An actor comes on the stage and plays his part; it appears to be real then, but it is a play all the same. Play your part in the world-drama, and at the same time be a detached spectator of it.

15th March, 1961.

Q: How many of the thousands of Papa's devotees have attained God-realization in this birth?

Ramdas: So far as Ramdas is concerned, all of them are manifestations of his eternal Beloved.

Q: They have not realized.

Ramdas: Who has not realized?

Q: They must also know that.

Ramdas: You want Ramdas' opinion. About their opinion, you have to ask them. If Ramdas sees imperfection in anybody, that means he is not seeing Ram at all in them. If he sees Ram in them, there is nothing like realization or non-realization. If he sees or feels himself one with all, then again that question does not arise.

Q: Ramdas is the Guru.

Ramdas: Some call him Guru. He passes on to them the Mantra given him by his Guru. They look upon him as Guru. But he is a humble servant of God.

Q: Ramdas watches the growth of his disciples.

Ramdas: He talks and jokes with them. When a question is put to him he answers. For Ramdas you are his Beloved. That is all he knows about you; nothing more, nothing less. He does not take the measuring rod and go and find out who has progressed and how far; who has realized and who has not. His way is to play and see the play. Everywhere it is His play.

Q: If one of his devotees comes and pretends, 'I am Brahman,' Ramdas will call him a bluffer.

Ramdas: Bluffer is also He. God alone plays all parts.

K : Why did Krishna want Arjuna to fight?

Ramdas: That is also a part played in the Lord's Lila. He plays so many parts by assuming Satwa Guna, Rajo Guna and Tamo Guna. Behind all these forms, who is there? Sri Krishna says, 'See Me in everything.' So nothing is wrong anywhere.

Q : But Ramdas can find out that person who has gone beyond the Gunas.

Ramdas: Everyone is Brahman and so is beyond the Gunas. Brahman is ever free, never bound.

Q : Papa has realized God, he can say that.

Ramdas: Who is to realize God? There is nobody else but Brahman. The Gita says, 'I am the only one dwelling everywhere and this manifestation is My Lila.' What Ramdas says is also according to the scriptures. When you pretend that you are ignorant, Ramdas gives you a dose of knowledge, just to keep the ball rolling. Ramdas may not be able to make himself clear. It is beyond comprehension.

Q : Will not Ramdas feel great joy if his teaching has been effective in one or two of his disciples?

Ramdas: Many by repeating Ramnam have given up the pretension of ignorance and become happy. Not that they got anything new. Pretension they gave up and Ramdas is joyful over it. Before that they were showing they were unhappy. It was also a pretension. The whole thing is a play.

Q : So we are all Brahma Jnanis!

Ramdas: You are Brahman. Where is the question of Brahma Jnanis? Who are you otherwise? If not Brahman, tell us what you are.

Q: Jiva.

Ramdas: There is no Jiva. All is Brahman. Jivahood is pretension.

Q: You are a Jivan Mukta.

Ramdas: You pretend you are bound. Give up pretension.

Q: When we realize that, we shall come and proclaim it.

Ramdas. You can do it any time; but you want to put on the mask and show that you are not Brahman. Cast off the mask. I am father, son, brother, magistrate, so and so — all these are masks. Actually you are Brahman. You want to play and you assume some disguises. All right, play on. The Divine Himself plays to please Himself.

Q: I feel that the majority of us present here share my fears and not your optimism.

Ramdas: The majority are then pretending. That does not affect you within. You are Brahman. It is an eternal Truth. There is no denying it.

Q: We would all love to throw off the mask.

Ramdas: You do not want to. You can don it and doff it.

Q: It is a veritable tragicomedy.

Ramdas: We create the tragedy and we create the comedy. Let us witness both. Both are one and the same, there is no difference.

Q : Papa is showing us the way of removing the veil by Ramnam. We will come and proclaim when we have removed it.

Ramdas. You can proclaim so at any time and anywhere.

18th March, 1961.

Ramdas: To remember God is to remember your own Self. To worship God is to worship your own Self. To surrender yourself to God is to surrender yourself to your own Self, so that you may know that you are the Self. 'Self' here means Atman which you are in reality. You have forgotten it. You have become ignorant of it. Forgetfulness is removed by remembrance and ignorance by knowledge. So remembrance leads to knowledge.

You are asked to take Ramnam. The name of Ram is the name of your own Self. He is called Atmaram. When you remember God or Ram you should feel that you are remembering your own immortal Self, so that you may ultimately realize that you are the Self.

You have to seek Him within yourself. External worship is a distant means of realizing God. The sooner you begin to worship Him in your own heart, the better for you. Then, in a short time you will realize that you and He are not different. As, from the beginning, you think that the God whom you have to realize or see is outside you, your struggle becomes protracted and you meet with frustration. Therefore, even after continuous struggle you do not find results which satisfy you. You meet with failure after failure because the mind is going out to external forms of worship. If you worship God

outside in any form, your mind is externalized, and from that form it goes to other forms or objects and your mind remains as distracted and as restless as ever.

You should feel His presence within yourself by constant remembrance. Then you will realize Him within and know ultimately that you are He. External forms of worship take a long time for you to turn your mind within. You find it very difficult. You must have a Sadhana which is independent, i.e., not dependent upon external condition, form or environment. Wherever you are, you must be able to tune yourself with God within. Meditation should come to you automatically through constant remembrance. People without any practice of continuous remembrance or concentration try to meditate on God and they do not succeed. The mind is wandering in a thousand places and they find it very hard to control it. If you take up the practice of chanting God's name — the name of your own Self — your mind will easily get concentration. Meditation will then become very easy. Take His name for a long time and then sit for meditation. You will find that the mind disappears in no time; you will forget the body and be conscious that you are the Atman.

Thereafter you remain in that consciousness at all times and in all situations. You may be active in the world, still you have that consciousness without break. That is called the Jivan Mukti state. The Jivan Mukta is active and does many things which ordinary people also do, but still he is in a state of perfect inner tranquillity, peace, serenity, equipoise, because he is one with the pure, changeless Self. When you know you are one with the Self and are active in the world, action does not bind you. Your actions are the outflow of

divine energy in and through you. That work, as the Gita says, will be for the welfare of the world. It is not done with the consciousness that you are bringing about peace and harmony in the world. When selfishness is absent, you cannot but think of the welfare of the people around you. The sun does not give light with a view to cheer us. We take advantage of the light and are happy. So also the actions of a Jivan Mukta are spontaneous. He is helpful and loving to everybody, because it is his nature; not that he does anything deliberately. The sun can give only light, not darkness; so a saint lives only for the good of others.

The sense of separation is evil. When that is absent, man realizes that he is not different from others and in doing good to them he does it as it were to himself. There is no otherness in him. He has realized God both in His manifest and unmanifest aspects. So his actions are actuated by the universal power for the fulfilment of the divine plan.

The object of your life is to realize the Self. That means, to know that you are the Self. In the state of ignorance you identify yourself with the body and this gives rise to conflicts, because you think you are separate from others. Then come ill-will and exploitation which in their turn bring misery for yourself and also for others. Such a life creates discord instead of harmony, misery instead of happiness. Happiness is born of unity, oneness. Ignorance is at the bottom of the whole trouble, which can only go by the realization of the Self, that is, the immortal, static Truth or Atman.

Your search for God is your search for the Atman or Self. At the end of your search you will realize you are He. You start with duality and end in non-duality.

Then you know that you have been seeking your own Self thinking that the Self was different from you. Ultimately you know you are that Self itself. There ends your quest.

Thereafter you have nothing more to do by way of Sadhana. You live, move and have your being in the Self. Self is the background, the basis of your life and activity. Your external life is lived in a spirit of spontaneity and your Atman is witnessing the movements of Shakti — in your body and the bodies of others. One eternal Shakti or Power has assumed all these forms. One Power it is that activates all things, and causes all movements in the universe. If you know this, or even you meditate on this truth, you will discover that the ego has no existence.

The ego is false. Let us accept this; then the ego-sense will disappear. Constant remembrance of the Atman will entirely efface the ego-sense. When you search for the ego it does not exist. It is an illusion. God alone exists. 'Everything is Vasudeva.' 'Verily, all this universe is Brahman.' Anything conceived of as separate from Brahman is hallucination. If we free ourselves from this we will at once realize that we have ever been the Self. Not that we acquire anything new thereby, but we wake up to the Reality. Our conception of things is changed entirely, especially the conception that we are the body. Strange is this illusion! How it came, when it came, is a question that cannot be answered. Our intellect is baffled when we try to know it. We find no solution. But the question is there all the same. We call it God's Maya.

We are here to free ourselves from the clutches of Maya by realizing the Atman which is the changeless,

birthless, deathless spirit. Saints, sages and seers have blazed the path for us. They proclaim, 'God is within yourself. Do not search for Him without. You are He.' You are the Self. Realize this. Then behold, the whole universe is your own manifestation. You know there is nothing besides Brahman or Atman. This will release you from ignorance and illusion and will grant you unending bliss, because then you will be like a bird released from a cage. Your life is utterly free from all limitations. You know you are the Eternal, the Infinite. Now you transcend time, space and causation. So long as you are caught up in them you cannot be really happy. You think you are an individual separate from the world-existence—from your fellow beings whom you look upon as other than yourself. This sense of separation will be lost the moment you know you are the Self. So our sages and saints emphasise the need for realizing the Self. After that you may play in whatever way you like in the world. Assume any part you want to play, but inwardly know you are the Atman.

The One has become many. The Gita speaks of two entities. Actually they are one. But for the sake of making people understand, Sri Krishna has spoken of two—Purusha, the static Spirit, and Prakriti, the dynamic Spirit. They are the two aspects of the same Truth. We cannot even speak of them as 'aspects'. It is difficult to describe these phases of Purushottama, the one all-inclusive, all-transcendent Godhead. He is at once static and dynamic. Although these qualities are apparently contrary to each other, yet they co-exist in Him. So Arjuna is asked to fight in the battle-field by attaining to this Yoga—Purushottama Yoga. If

you have realized Purushottama as the all-comprehensive, integral Godhead, then you are active and inactive at the same time — as Purusha, inactive and as Prakriti, active.

Sri Krishna is Purushottama. His task is to raise the human being to His own status. The knowledge contained in the Gita is knowledge in its fulness and entirety. Arjuna was asked to fight as though he was not fighting. Taking your stand on the static Purusha, be active in the world for Lokasangraha, inspired by the all-pervading, eternal Shakti. The Shakti works for the fulfilment of a universal purpose, the welfare of all people in the world. And still you will remain ever a witness as Atman, unaffected and ever free. The Sanskrit words used are Sakshi and Alipta. In the presence of the Purusha the Prakriti is active and the actions do not affect the Purusha. They will be conducive to the good of the world and therefore selfless. Selfish actions are the cause of misery in the world. Each one wants to gain at the expense of others. According to the Yoga preached by Sri Krishna you must be selfless in your actions and at the same time be filled with divine ecstasy.

So let your devotion be to God within you. You start with duality. You look upon Him as Master and yourself as His servant or Him as Mother and yourself as His child. In whatever way you worship and adore Him and surrender yourself to Him, let it all be to God within you. He is verily in you. By constantly taking His name you will have your mind purified, i.e., freed from all passions and desires of the flesh. You will then realize that God within you is your own Self. Before that you did not know that you and He are one.

So preparation is necessary. First is the company of saints and sages. Remembrance of God becomes possible by having the frequent contacts of saints. In their presence it is that you are spiritually awakened and are able to maintain a steady remembrance of God — your own Self. You will transcend time and space, and joy and peace will be welling up within you. You are surprised how you got this experience, because till then you knew only ephemeral pleasures derived from the objects of the senses. When you are in the presence of saints you are not in contact with any external sense object and still a strange peace and joy is revealed in you as Swami Vivekananda, Swami Brahmananda and other intimate disciples of Sri Ramakrishna experienced in his presence. They were attracted by his divine personality more and more. When they were with him they found the peace that passeth understanding, which brought about a spiritual awakening in them and ultimately the realization of God. So the company of saints is essential for those who strive to walk on the spiritual path.

Secondly, meditate constantly upon the Self. Take the Name as a symbol of the Self. Name and Self or God are not different. So, when you utter the Name you must be conscious of the Self. In that way attune your mind to the Self so that the [Self may reveal itself in you in all its grandeur and magnificence. You will then be flooded with divine bliss and peace.

The question which confronts an aspirant when he tries to walk on the path of God-realization is how to control the restless mind. You cannot be aware of the Atman unless your mind is free from restlessness and impurities. To achieve this you have to undergo

some discipline, and the chanting of God's name is of the greatest help in this direction. If you with all faith chant the Name that stands for the Self, you will gradually be able to liberate your mind from all distracting thoughts and make it calm, pure and serene. We are told in the Hindu scriptures that unless the mind is thoroughly purified you cannot realize God. So the heart must be perfectly pure — free from lust, greed and wrath. For attaining it, repetition of God's name with all faith and devotion is the easiest means. There is no easier way to quell the waves of the mind and free it from all kinds of desires. Many struggle for years and complain that their minds are as restless as ever. They remain desire-ridden in spite of continuous effort to control them.

Thus the name of God is all-powerful. It subdues the waves of the mind and yields to the aspirant strength, steadiness and peace. It sounds sweet to you. The mother finds the name of her child very sweet to her ears. Even if somebody else calls out the child's name she attentively listens to it. If you have a real longing to realize God, His name should cast a spell on you and prevent your mind from wandering. A miser, even though he may be engaged otherwise, is attracted the moment he hears the sound of a coin dropping on the ground. The sound is most pleasing to him. So is God's name to the devotee. The sound of His name arrests the movements of the mind and it gets absorbed in it immediately. That is the easiest way to free the mind from restlessness.

Under the spell of the mind you think you are the body. Unless the mind is calm and serene you cannot realize the Atman. The name stills the mind, brings

out the bliss of the Atman and floods your entire being with it. Edward Carpenter, while in Ceylon, met a Jnani. When they went out for a walk, Edward Carpenter asked the Jnani, 'What is your state?' He replied in Tamil, '*Anandam, eppodum Anandam*' — Bliss, always bliss. That is all he said.

19th March, 1961.

Ramdas: The devotee cries to God: 'O Lord, my eyes are not thirsty to see you, ears are not eager to hear your glories, sleep is absolutely out of my control. In this condition where is the possibility of my realizing you? How can I forget the world?' By forgetting the world alone the inner awakening comes. When your thirst for God is intense, all the senses are unattached to the objects of the world; they become perfectly pure, calm and controlled.

Sense objects should not disturb or attract you. If they do, you are unfit for Sadhana. There must be real hunger for God. The longing for Jnana or Moksha should be intense. Then the world has no attraction for you. Else the mind longs for the pleasures of the senses with the result that God-remembrance and meditation become impossible. To illustrate this the example of the hen sitting on the eggs for hatching is given. She concentrates her whole mind on the eggs. That you can find out from her eyes. The eyes are vacant. They see and see not. Such must be the concentration of one seeking the Atman. The Gita says, the seeker of God should be like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs whenever it wants. Likewise we should withdraw our senses and not allow them to go outward.

Spiritual practice becomes possible only if it is backed up by vairagya. Mere external Vairagya will not do. Inner Vairagya must be here. That is born of sincere, wholehearted aspiration to realize God. When the heart aspires, the Indriyas do not function in the manner they did before. They function harmlessly without hankering after objects. They co-operate with you in your quest. When you have intense vairagya the practice of meditation and concentration becomes fruitful. Otherwise there will be a tug-of-war within you, a protracted struggle in which the Indriyas seek to go outwards and your mind strives to go inwards.

It is this problem that Arjuna posed before Sri Krishna: 'I intellectually understand you, but I cannot practise it because mind is as restless as the wind. How can I control it? How can I fix it on one point within myself?' Sri Krishna said.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

'It is true, Arjuna, mind is difficult to control, it is restless. But there is a way to do it — through Abhyasa and Vairagya'.

If there is no Vairagya the spiritual aspirant cannot succeed in realizing the Truth. This Vairagya is mainly a state of inner renunciation — a condition of the mind.

There are many persons who pass for Vairagis, because they have given up their homes. But they have not given up the Samsara of the mind. Their mind is not free from attachments. They are not Vairagis in the real sense of the term. Having realized the hollowness and ephemeral nature of life and pleasures.

they are no longer drawn to them. Their minds recoil from things outside. That recoil is Vairagya. That comes when you seek the Eternal with all your heart. It is truly said that through Vichara you get Vairagya. When you know that tuning your life with the Eternal is the only way for real happiness and peace, then naturally the external objects do not attract you. And it is easy for the mind to be drawn inward in meditation. Then the mind will disappear and you know who you are in reality — the all blissful Truth or Atman.

‘I have given up this thing and that thing. I have given up my job:’ — it is not by these that you can realize the Truth. Free the mind from longing for the objects of the senses by one-pointed, concentrated, intense longing for God-realization. The fire of that longing must be kept burning bright in your heart till all desires of the world are reduced to ashes. Then you have real Vairagya; and so long as Vairagya is there, mind does not cling to the things of the world. It gets absorbed in the Self — is lost in contemplation and meditation. Who meditates? The mind meditates. Atman does not meditate. The object is to still the mind. Stilling the mind is not easy when it is running about. When the mind ceases to be, then you realize you are the Atman. Look without seeing, hear without listening, eat without tasting—that is the thing you have to attain through longing for God. It does not come to you if you merely wish for it. It is the result of intense longing for God — Bhakti. Such is Bhakti, a devotion which keeps away all thoughts except of God. Now you have rejected the unreal and identified yourself with the Real. Your connection with the unreal is lost when you identify yourself with the Real. It is a necessary or inevitable corollary. Thereafter you make

no distinction between the eternal and the non-eternal, the manifest and the unmanifest.

A tremendous control over the mind is necessary. He is a hero who has conquered the mind and has eliminated it by realization of the Atman. The worst temptations cannot attract him. That is why Sannyasins are made to wear cloth dyed in orange or Gerrua colour. The colour of the cloth represents flame, the flame of renunciation. A Sannyasin is one in whom all craving and desires are burning as a flame. A Buddhist monk uses cloth of yellow colour—the colour of the dead body. He considers himself as a walking 'dead' body. He is dead to the world. He is dead to the passions even as a dead body is no longer swayed by passions or attachments.

We are too much conscious of the world, too much conscious of the things outside—either attracted or repelled by them. But the Vairagi has no craving for anything in the world. He seeks only the Eternal. That is the main purpose of his life and he is engaged day and night in that pursuit.

When Sukadeva was walking from one place to another, followed by Vyasa his father, they had to pass by the side of a river where women were bathing without any cloth on their bodies. They were disporting themselves in water. Sukadeva passed by without turning this way or that. His gaze was turned inward and he was unmindful of his body and the surroundings, and the women did not take notice of him. Whereas, when Vyasa came near the river, the women at once covered themselves with their clothes. This shows Vyasa had not Sukadeva's Vairagya. The one was dead to the world, the other was not.

Attraction diverts the sight. The important thing is to control the sight. We can make out whether an aspirant is genuine or otherwise by looking at his eyes. Eyes are the windows of the soul. You must have a child's look — so innocent, guileless, free from passion and desire. Your eyes reflect the Vasanas in you. Your look is impure. What a vast difference there is between your look and that of a child! The mother remains even naked before a child but not so before an elderly person. The child sees her and the elderly person also sees her. The seeing is different. So, Sukadeva had the eyes of a child, and his father Vyasa had the eyes of an adult. Sukadeva had the sight of oneness, Vyasa had the sight of duality. These great examples are before us to show which way we have to go to realize the Truth. We should not allow the Indriyas to play false or lead us astray. If we give them free reins there is no hope of our realizing the Truth. Do it as a practice at first by not letting your eyes dwell on objects of attraction; afterwards your sight become natural and pure like that of a child.

In the child there may be the hidden seed of desire. But in the sage even the seed is destroyed — burnt to ashes in the fire of Jnana. So his state is far more glorious than that of a child. Therefore he is called a Siddha or perfected soul. He alone who has realized the Truth and in whom all Vasanas are extinct can be childlike. What a grand state it is when the seed of desire is completely destroyed in a person! To be desireless — how blessed it is!

28th March, 1961.

Q : Do Self-realized souls take birth, Papa?

Ramdas: When they merge into the all-pervading Truth as 'the dew-drop falls into the shining sea' and becomes one with it, where is rebirth for them? Truth is birthless and deathless.

Q: Unrealized souls take birth.

Ramdas: Who is unrealized? God alone exists.

Q: All have not realized.

Ramdas: Is it not He who has become all? सर्वे
खल्विदं ब्रह्म

There is only Brahman. Birth and death are only conceptions. Get rid of these.

Q: Whose conceptions?

Ramdas: The questioner's conceptions.

Q: Only when the Jiva mingles with the ocean of Truth, he merges in It.

Ramdas: That is only an example given. It is an imperfect analogy. When you are not separate from Him at any time, the sense of separation is an illusion. To whom is the illusion? Illusion itself is false. In the last analysis everything is Brahman. You are already That — no question of attaining It.

Q: Then what is Jiva?

Ramdas: Jiva is Brahman. When there is nothing but Brahman, the idea of Jiva is merely a conception of the questioner. If the questioner sees into himself, he finds he is Brahman. The question itself is foolish. They speak so much of Maya which does not exist. Maya is merely an idea which has no reality. We make

a bugbear of Maya. We think we are in the clutches of Maya. This is all mental delusion.

Q: Is it a shadow?

Ramdas: Truth has no shadow. We imagine the shadow and speak about it. When we say that God alone exists, there is no question of anything else but He. Identify Maya with Him; then Maya ceases to be.

Q: It is very difficult to get over body-consciousness.

Ramdas: Body-consciousness makes you unaware of the Divine. When you forget the body in deep sleep, you experience in a way the universal Atman. When you come to the body idea on waking, that experience disappears. But when in the waking state itself you rise above body-consciousness and realize divine consciousness, that is Brahma Jnana, Brahmi Sthiti. It is a state which cannot be put into words.

Q: But it can be realized or experienced.

Ramdas: Yes. It must be remembered, this realization comes only through divine grace. Grace comes to you unsought when God wills it. So we say God is all-merciful. In the Upanishads it is said, 'God reveals Himself in that heart which He chooses.'

Grace is absolute. It works unconditionally. Otherwise it cannot be grace. Coming, as it does, from an all-powerful Being, if it works only under certain conditions, then those conditions are more potent than grace. Grace must work under all conditions, then only it is grace. The person may be fit or unfit. If unfit, grace makes him fit. Grace does not wait for preparation on the part of the recipient.

Q : Does He choose at random?

Ramdas: He alone knows. Our intellect is too poor to grasp this mystery. We are baffled. We can simply say that we do not know the why and the wherefore of the ways and workings of grace. When the disciples of Jesus found fault with him for associating himself with sinners, he remarked: 'I have come to save sinners and not the virtuous. My work is among them.'

Suppose a person has five children and four of them are well-behaved and one is leading a bad life. The parents' concern is more about that one than about the others. They try their best to wean him from evil ways. The parents are right when they feel pity for him and make efforts to save him.

When God's grace came to Ramdas, he never felt he deserved it. What he did in the past lives to merit it, he does not know. In this life he did not do anything to make himself fit for grace. Yet his life was transformed by grace. Grace poured on him through saints. Saints are Gods on earth, even more than God. What brings about our contact with them? God's grace.—Atma Kripa — alone. It does not come by our struggle or effort. Guru Kripa comes in a second when we are in his presence, and we are transformed.

In some cases, although outwardly no change is visible, grace works. You want to break a big stone. Suppose after twenty blows it breaks. After giving one blow if you look at it, there is apparently no change. But the molecules inside the stone are affected. Every blow does its work and is necessary for the breaking of the stone at the twentieth blow. In the same way, every time you go to a saint, some push is given to you from

within and you are nearer to the breaking point and some day the last touch will at once produce a marvellous transformation in you. So a saint's contact never goes in vain.

सत्संगत्वे निस्संगत्वं निस्संगत्वे निर्मोहत्वम् ।
निर्मोहत्वे निश्चरत्वं निश्चलत्वे जीवन्मुक्तिः ॥

‘Contact of saints gives detachmen , which in turn brings freedom from delusion. Freedom from delusion results in perfect stillness of mind which grants Mukti or liberation in life.’

See how it works out. If you argue that you have done anything in your past life to deserve grace, it was He who prompted you to do so. Our tendencies are ever drawing us towards the world. The turn towards God comes through saints. They inspire us to use our Vichara for the right purpose. Some people, you will find, have their minds turned towards God from childhood. It is the result of the Samskaras of their previous lives. God makes them go through the necessary Sadhana in this life. First, awakening of the Spirit comes from within. That gradually leads one to the contact of a saint. First Atma Kripa and then Guru Kripa. Guru is the form assumed by the A man to guide you from outside. Thereafter At man is the Guru. The work is done. Then you know you are the Atman.

Whenever a man going on the wrong path turns suddenly to the path of righteousness, we say that God has saved him. We do not say he has saved himself. For God alone does it. Whenever you do anything good or great, feel that God makes you do it.

4th April, 1961.

Ramdas: Here is a letter from K., wherein he describes the visions and blissful experiences he recently had.

Q : These are but mental projections.

Ramdas: It goes without saying. But the visions and experiences show that your mind has turned Godward. They do not indicate any realization of the Self or Atman.

Q : Perhaps they serve to encourage the aspirants.

Ramdas: No. Rise beyond them. Do not crave again and again for such experiences. They have come and they should go. The main thing is to realize Brahman. Some people hold to certain images and forms from childhood, and those are projected out as visions. Of course, they are better than the experiences of worldly pleasures and enjoyments. In fact, there is no need for visions at all. One can have Self-realization without having them.

The joy the writer of this letter speaks of is Sattwic. It is not permanent. The mind is subject to change according to Gunas. When Sattwa Guna is superseded by other Gunas the joy disappears. Permanent bliss comes only when you realize the Self. Your Bhakti must be based upon Jnana. Actual experience of bliss comes when you realize the Self, when you know that you are the Atman.

The world is a projection—not a creation. Creation must come out of something, just as a potter makes the pot out of clay. The world is not created like that.

God and the world are not different. The sun gives light. It is a projection. Sun *is* light itself. Similarly world *is* God Himself. Manifest and unmanifest are one and the same. There are no two entities. You cannot divide them. So you cannot say the world exists apart from God. Everything is He. Projection means, the same unmanifest is seen as manifestation. We try to define Him. We are baffled. Various philosophers have spoken of Him in various ways. Naturally they do not agree. Silence is the best way to describe Him. So when we talk of Him we do so in terms of opposites. When we say He is this, He is also that. Brahman is He, Maya is He. Take them as one. Then the question is solved. Otherwise you are puzzled.

Some years ago, Ramdas advised a lady aspirant to practise loving everybody. She practised this and came to trouble as people took undue advantage of her attitude. Then Ramdas told her, 'To love evrybody is to love nobody.' Samadarshan means to look upon all with an equal eye. It is based upon the realization of the Atman — in which you see everybody as yourself. So there is none other than yourself—consequently you love nobody. Love means feeling of oneness with everybody. Love for only the external forms is Moha or attachment. We generally call it love but it is on the physical plane. Personal love develops into attachment. That is why Sage Yajnavalkya advised Maitreyi, 'Love your husband for the sake of the Atman, not for the sake of the husband.' That means you love the Atman, not the form. This is possible only by realizing the Atman. I pervade everywhere means I, as Atman, pervade everywhere.

True love is the outer expression of inner oneness with everybody. Take the case of Mataji. She feels for and loves all alike. What is the secret? She has equal vision. It is very difficult to understand this. Opposites always clash. God is nameless, formless and attributeless. Light is He, darkness is He. Truth is He, untruth is He. That means you have to transcend the idea of truth and untruth, rise above like and dislike and realize the Atman. Otherwise the pairs of opposites will harass you. Think of everything as He. Then God alone is for you.

Sri Ramakrishna was disturbed by the ideas of sin and virtue, truth and untruth. Whenever he failed in his attempt to adhere to truth, he would be upset. Do you know what he did? 'O Mother,' he said, 'I do not know what is good and what is bad,' and offered both to the Mother. Then he became free. Otherwise you are caught up in these Dwandwas. See what Sri Krishna says:

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज ।

Both Dharma and Adharma you should surrender to Him. That is the highest Dharma. Then the pairs of opposites disappear and the supreme Consciousness alone exists. That is what you are.

The language of the Gita is at times puzzling. In one place Sri Krishna says: 'All are same to Me.' In another place He says: 'My devotees are dear to Me.' How can we reconcile these two apparently contradictory statements? As Atman He is the same to everybody; but those who are near Him in spirit are H's devotees and the others are not. In many ways it can be explained. But it is difficult to understand the true

import. Now take the instance of the sun. It shines equally on all. Those who stand in the light can be said to be 'dear' to the sun as they benefit by the light, and those who keep themselves away from sun-light are said to be 'not dear' to the sun as they do not benefit by the light. So devotees are those who are near and dear to God.

Q: As God is all-pervading, He is always with everybody, wherever the latter may be.

Ramdas: As formless He is everywhere. He says, 'My devotee,' in a personal sense. Otherwise there is no question of 'dear' or 'not dear'. He speaks of Himself as the Purushottama, as an Avatar. Arjuna was His devotee and therefore dear to Him. But he says, 'I am not merely as you see Me in this form, but I am the all-pervading, universal Truth.' Arjuna was given the universal vision and that frightened him. He was under the impression that Sri Krishna was like himself, having only a form, and he was worshipping him for his greatness. Sri Krishna made Arjuna his own. That is why he gave him Vishwarupa Darshan. You must be dear to God; then you are saved. When He makes you His own, you cannot think of anything else but Him. If you say to God, 'I am Yours,' after a time you may say, 'I am not Yours.' The force of Maya is hard to overcome. We must tread the path of Bhakti. Although Arjuna sometimes tried to escape from Sri Krishna, He caught him. Once you are in His clutches, you cannot get away. If a child holds the hand of the father, it may let it go. If the father holds the child, then there is no chance of a fall. In the same way, if the Lord holds you, you are saved. That is how God caught hold of Ramdas. There was no fear for him, and

moreover he did not struggle to get away. Ramdas was completely under His subjection. Like a puppet in the hands of the showman, he danced to His tune. He was saved.

5th April, 1961.

Q : Kindly tell us something about total surrender.

Ramdas: Surrender is of one kind — total only. It means dedication of your entire life to God. There is no such thing as partial dedication. 'I-ness' is not given up partially.

Q: How to surrender? What is the process?

Ramdas: Constantly remember God. Always think, act and feel in terms of God. Ego-sense then disappears. You know now that God makes you think, makes you feel, makes you act. This is the state of surrender. In that state 'I-ness' has no existence. Complete elimination of the ego-sense is surrender, and that comes only with the realization of the Atman.

Q : So, for Sadhakas, surrender is not possible.

Ramdas: It is possible for Sadhakas to surrender. Then only ego-sense will completely disappear. Before that, humility gradually leads you to surrender. When you meditate upon God, God-consciousness comes and as a result of that, your ego-sense disappears. In that state surrender is complete. Surrender and God-realization go together. As Sri Aurobindo puts it, 'Your aspiration reaches such a pitch that you call down grace; grace and aspiration meet; you realize the Self and ego-sense disappears.' The contact takes place and illumination comes. Grace creates aspiration in you, and

when aspiration reaches a certain pitch, there is a descent of grace and then your ego-sense completely vanishes. Thus, there should be grace at the beginning, in the middle and in the end. You cannot have aspiration without grace; again without grace the aspiration cannot be fulfilled in Self-realization.

You should not think that the aspiration is your making. It is He who creates it in you. He turns you towards Himself by making you discriminate in the proper way. Many people want to walk on the path of righteousness and to give up their vices, but they cannot do it. When divine force works in you, your mind turns towards the right path. It is then you find grace has worked. By thinking and struggling you cannot get the strength to resist temptations and walk on the path of God. Therefore, grace is all in all. Nothing can happen without grace. A man who has surrendered himself to God can never bring himself to say, 'I did it.' It is strange to his ears when others speak in that strain.

It is a false notion that *you* do anything. When that goes you are utterly free and you cannot feel that you have done anything even when something has been done. You may use the third person. You say, 'This body did it.' You refer to the body as if it is something other than yourself. When reading Ramdas' book 'In Quest of God,' the reader thinks that Ramdas has written about somebody else and that it is a biography — not an autobiography. When reading it the reader loses his ego or individuality. He follows Ramdas through his pilgrimages. Ramdas wrote it in a peculiar way.

Q : Perhaps, hardly any book exists like this one.

Ramdas: Just like the autobiography of Mataji. It is unique. Ramdas has yet to translate it.

Today, in the Pravachan, Sri Hariharananda Swami was speaking about Vasana Kshaya. Only the fire of Jnana can destroy desires or Vasanas. Where there is ego, there will be desires or Vasanas. Sri Ramakrishna has described what surrender is: 'O God, I am nothing and You are everything.' It is not enough if we merely say it. This can be realized only by a continuous stream of God-remembrance. All the senses and the body-consciousness have to be transcended. When I am nothing, 'I' does not exist; You alone exist. Then I become Yourself. Where does the 'I' go? 'I' disappears — everything is Yourself; so I am also Yourself. The individual sense disappears and the cosmic or universal consciousness dawns in you. 'Thy will is supreme,' — this is the Mantra some people repeat to destroy the ego-sense.

Identify yourself with the Atman through meditation by turning your mind inward and tuning yourself with the divine name. Outwardly surrender all your actions to the Divine, believing that all is done by the divine power — not only what you individually do, but everything that happens. By this double process the ego-sense will be completely obliterated. In both ways you are free. Otherwise you lose yourself in meditation, mind is still and you have that Consciousness for the time being; but in active life the sense of difference between yourself and the cosmic Power is maintained and the inner state is affected. So both processes must be complementary to each other, one helping the other. Thus you can be free from the ego-sense both when you are sitting silent and when you are active in the world. Then you do not feel disturbed in any condition.

Q: How can this be practicable in business?

Ramdas: When things go wrong you throw the blame on God. But when you get success you arrogate it to yourself. When blows come in quick succession, your ego is knocked out and you learn to attribute success also to Him. This attitude cannot be achieved overnight. It is not easy.

If you only sit and reflect on the wonders of nature, you will gradually begin to feel that everything happens by the divine will and power. Many inner organs of your body are functioning without your effort. Trees and shrubs grow, flower and bear fruits. You also grow from childhood to manhood and then to old age. What is the power that governs these things? If you know that one universal power is activating everything, where is the room for the ego to assert itself? When you recognize and experience this truth, you become incapable of doing wrong to anyone. The sense of diversity is got rid of by this consciousness. You must practise it. There are some occasions when you instinctively feel that some higher power is at work in the world. Then the ego-sense is absent.

The sense of diversity is born of ignorance. Then you see different forces at work. When you know that there is only one power at work, you will be free. The universal power it is that does everything. But you say, 'I did it. I have power,' and so on. This is the mistake you make. You are under an illusion. The sooner you free yourself from this illusion, the better. The way is to surrender yourself to God, knowing that His universal power is making you act. Now when you sit silent and still the mind, you realize the Eternal — the Atman.

Q : What was the power that worked through Ravana and such others?

Ramdas: God's power works also through Rajasic and Tamasic channels, just as pure water flows through the gutter.

Q : Who made it pass through the dirty channel?

Ramdas: Our illusion did it. 'Who put this illusion into us?' you will ask. If He is responsible we must ask Him to remove it. It does not mean that we must continue to hug the illusion.

Q : *He* must turn our mind to Him.

Ramdas: Nobody need teach us to pray. When miseries and troubles come, we naturally turn to God. If you know that God does everything for good, you are saved.

Q : When we are with Papa we are all right. When we go away from here, we are caught by that illusion.

Ramdas: If you pray to the God within, it will be permanently removed. Turn your gaze within, still the mind and realize the Self. Then you will find that the illusion has completely disappeared. When the question is there, the questioner is there, and the illusion also is there. Otherwise you will sit silent, and you will know that everything happens by divine will, that there is only one Atman pervading everywhere, and that the world also is the form of the Atman. You will sit contented, without any doubts. As soon as you put the question, it is clear you are under an illusion.

Q : If illusion rests in the questioner, what about the answerer?

Ramdas: The answerer says, 'There is no illusion.' Give up the illusion and the question also will be solved. Do you think the answerer is under an illusion?

Q : He can also choose to remain silent.

Ramdas: Yes. He may choose to dispel the illusion either through silence or speech. By both means he can set the doubts at rest.

A saint was living in his kuti; his disciple also was with him for some months, serving him faithfully. He asked no questions, but waited patiently for the saint to give him instruction. One day the disciple had gone out on some work, and when he returned, the doors of the kuti were found closed. He knocked at the door. The saint asked, 'Who is knocking?' 'I', answered the disciple. 'If it is the individual 'I', give it up; if it is the cosmic 'I', keep it,' said the saint. By this simple instruction the disciple was enlightened. It destroyed his illusion. Kabir calls it Shabdabana — word-arrow.

Q : Instead of replying 'I', if he had given his own name, what advice would he have had from the saint?

Ramdas: The saint would have said, 'If the name refers to the individual, give it up; if it is of the universal, keep it.'

6th April, 1961.

Ramdas: See the wonderful potency of words. Some words are imbued with the power to save and some with the power to kill. A saint approaches a person who has made up his mind to commit suicide, and speaks to him some sweet and endearing words; he is thereby shaken from his resolve to die and is saved. A cruel

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man abuses another in public and the latter, as a result, goes and commits suicide as he is unable to bear the insult. Kabir says, 'If you want to have Ram, do not speak any harsh or cruel word to anybody.'

Q : If we say that God is merciful, we have to admit that He is cruel also. Is it not, Papa?

Ramdas: He was cruel to Hiranyakasipu and merciful to Prahlada. He was cruel to Ravana and merciful to Vibhishana.

In fact, your own Karma reacts on you. You love God and you receive love from Him. You hate Him; you receive hate in return. God is Nirguna and Nirvikara — attributeless and changeless. According to the Old Testament, God was a God full of wrath. The people were afraid of Him. Jesus Christ says that God is love, mercy and forgiveness. That means you create God according to your own conception. He is neither love nor hate. The attitude of Hiranyakasipu towards God was one of hatred, and the result was that he was killed. Prahlada loved Him, and he got love in return; he was protected. So God is creator, protector and destroyer.

Bhakta says, 'I created You.' He is right. He then aspires to grow into the likeness of a God who is love and compassion. Jesus Christ never gave any form to God, but he endowed Him with qualities. When you worship Him as such, you develop those qualities in you which give you peace and joy. In active life as Saguna Murti you are full of mercy, kindness and love towards all beings and creatures, because you have given Him these attributes. You then become the embodiment of those qualities yourself. You become Vishnu.

Vishnu, Rudra and Brahma are not different. The same Para Shakti has become Brahma, the creator, Vishnu, the protector and Rudra, the destroyer. They are said to be agents under the Divine Mother. These are Saguna aspects; they are not separate.

God protects the good and destroys evil doers.

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृतां ।

Even that destruction gives liberation. But it will give fear before death. Kamsa feared God. Ravana hated Him. They were killed by Him and so liberation came to them. When a Sadhu was killed by an English soldier during the Indian Mutiny the latter was not a soldier in the eyes of the dying Sadhu but God. The Sadhu must have got Moksha. If we look upon the killer as God, then our Moksha is sure.

If Gandhiji had survived the attack from Godse he would not have allowed the Government to punish him in any manner. When he was assaulted by a Pathan in South Africa, he was so full of kindness and forgiveness towards him that the Pathan become his followee. So pure was Gandhiji's heart.

So God is Nirguna; His devotees create out of Him their Saguna God.

Q : Sishupala was abusing Sri Krishna to the very last. But when Sri Krishna killed him, Sishupala's soul merged in the Lord.

Ramdas: It was Sri Krishna's grace. Your actions take on the colour of your heart. The heart determines the nature of the action. Tukaram said, 'My Lord! You may free me or kill me. I will not give you up!' Even to die at His hands means liberation to the

devotee. Tukaram did not say that God should only protect him. Death at the hands of God was salvation to him. Hiranyakasipu must have passed through the hell of fear and hatred, but his death at the hands of Narasimha was redemption for him. Narasimha was so terrible that he tore Hiranyakasipu to pieces. But you find many repeating His name, 'Narasimha.' Why is he worshipped and adored so much? Why is his name so dear to devotees? For he came and saved Prahlada, his devotee, and killed the Asura who harassed not only Prahlada, but the entire world.

8th April, 1961.

Q : What is the nature of the life of one who lives from moment to moment?

Ramdas: He is attuned to the Eternal. He is one with the Eternal. He has realized the Eternal. He is the Eternal. There is no question of living from moment to moment. That expression is not quite correct. Moment shows a period of time. He is not bound by time. He is beyond time, space, and causation. For him time does not exist. Moment is a part of time. How can that exist when time itself is false? The divisions you make in time such as years, months, days, hours, minutes and seconds are imaginary. So also space is limitless. It is divided into miles, furlongs, yards and inches. All these are arbitrary.

Eternal time and infinite space cannot be divided into parts. There is neither dawn nor sunset. The sun ever shines, and never rises or sets. Day and night have no reality. Measurements have no reality. The Eternal and Infinite alone exists. When you forget the

body, you have no account of time or space. When you sit in meditation or when you are absorbed in divine thought, you have no idea how the time passes. When you are immersed in a state of bliss, time has no value for you. Therefore a perfectly blissful state is the state of immortality. That bliss is born of your realization that you are the Eternal. Immortality and bliss are one. Atman itself is Ananda. Atman is immortal.

When we are in time and space, the joy that we get is transitory, because it is controlled by them. When we transcend them, our joy is eternal. Therefore those who have realized that they are the Atman are ever blissful. They are above the sense of time and space. They may, for the sake of play, recognize the passage of time, but inwardly they know that the Atman is beyond time and space.

13th April, 1961.

Q : Does love for living beings mean love for God?

Ramdas: You must see God in all beings and creatures in the world. Verily, when you love the whole creation, you love God.

Q : Does God create evil?

Ramdas: Evil is man's creation. Satan is man's creation. God is absolute goodness and love. No evil can come from Him. So we are asked to love everybody; even to love our so-called enemy. If you see evil in your enemy, you cannot love him. Feeling of enmity arises from impurity in our mind. 'Blessed is he who is pure in heart, for he shall see God.'

Q : Are not all the evil forces in the world created by God?

Ramdas: They are all created by man. It is our blurred and impure vision that perceives evil. If God can create evil, He must be evil. God cannot be good then. Out of goodness, evil cannot come. Out of evil alone evil can come. If He is so, He is not worthy of our adoration or love. God is absolute purity, love, mercy, kindness and goodness. In Jesus' heart there was no hate, no dislike, no wrath. He was love incarnate. So also all great saints and spiritual masters are embodiments of goodness.

It is said that God is forgiveness. It means He recognizes the wrong done. This is not so in the highest sense. God does not see any wrong at all. A mother who loves her child does not see any fault in it whatever it does. God sees no fault in those who turn to Him. The 'prodigal son,' when he returned after living a very bad life, was not rejected by his loving father. God is in our heart. He is an ocean of mercy. When we look up to Him, He takes us up. That is why we should turn our mind to God so that His grace may enter into us and transform our life.

Q : What is grace?

Ramdas: A divine power which reveals itself in us and turns our mind towards God. We then give up our wrong ways and enter into a new way of life. We ultimately feel His presence everywhere and love all beings alike.

Q : If we have not the grace of God, there is no use of struggling for the attainment of peace.

Ramdas: Our efforts do end in our knowing that our efforts can achieve nothing. We think we will be

able to realize God and we struggle without knowing that by His grace alone we can really find Him. We fail at every step. Then we surrender ourselves to Him and are flooded with grace.

Q : I have heard about surrendering oneself to God but.....

Ramdas: It is difficult to put yourself entirely in His hands and allow Him to transform you — to give up the ego completely. 'Oh God, I am nothing. You are everything. Your will, not my will. Reveal Yourself in me and take me into Yourself. Lead me as You will.' This is surrender. Surrender is not a thing merely to be talked about. We must practise it; we must always look up to Him for guidance and protection. Then we feel we are changed beings. Our mind will be fixed on Him. We will do everything for His sake and do always the right thing, because He is our guide. When we forget Him we harm ourselves and also others. When He inspires us we make our life pure and blissful. We will be kind and good to all around us.

Q : When the moment of surrender has not arrived, there is no use of thinking of surrender.

Ramdas: 'Oh God, I do not know how to surrender. Give me continuous remembrance by which the ego may be put down and surrender may become a reality.' By such prayer and constant remembrance of Him, we can eliminate the ego-sense which is very strong and which asserts itself and controls us. We must ask God to come to our rescue. When we feel helpless and pray to Him, He helps us.

You must create a relationship with Him and remember Him with all love so that His peace and

power may flow into you. That is prayer. You cut a channel from a river to a pond. Then the water flows into the pond. Prayer is the means of communication. He is within us. We then allow His joy to reveal itself in us.

Q : Is prayer and meditation the same?

Ramdas: Through remembrance we realize our oneness with Him. When we forget Hlm we think of worldly things. When the mind is raised through remembrance it is free from disturbance, and it is then we are attuned to God. This attunement is meditation. All this must come to us through grace. We want grace in abundance so that our whole life may be transformed and we may come to realize that we and He are one. It is a most blessed state.

Some people, when they try their best to purify their mind and cannot do so, cry out to God. Purity is an essential condition for realizing God. When the mind does not become pure by our own efforts, we pray to God and become humble. Humility makes us pure. Pray with all your strength, heart and soul. That is how we must pray. Superficial prayers will not do.

Q : Many teach us the way to peace, but they do not set an example.

Ramdas: Words are words after all. You must live in the presence of one who practises what he preaches, and then you can learn by contact and observation. Unless one lives the life and sets an example, one cannot instil faith in others. Lives of saints and sages are great examples to us. We come to know what a true life is. Example is better than precept. People talk for hours together; they do not live the life. Such talks do not impress us.

Q : Why did God create suffering?

Ramdas: In suffering we remember God. In giving us suffering He is very kind to us; He enables us to remember Him. As manure is necessary for the growth of a plant, so suffering is necessary for the growth of the soul.

Q : A child is born lame and blind. Is it the work of God or the sin of the father?

Ramdas: Even granting that God had made the child lame, He should have meant well. It is better for one to be lame and blind and have faith in God than to be a non-believer. Some years ago Ramdas had gone to see a saint. There was a highly qualified doctor with Ramdas. In the company of the saint was a blind Sadhu who had a woman to guide him. The doctor examined the blind Sadhu and told him 'I will do a simple operation and restore your eye-sight.' He replied, 'Though God has deprived me of my sight, He has opened my inner eye and I am quite happy. God has done this for my good.' If the blind and lame take things in this light it is very good for them. Among those who are without any disability there are some who live a life of immorality and vice. Where does that life lead them to?

Every condition can make us happy if we constantly remember God and the mind is attuned to Him. A man who is a cripple lives as if he is in heaven; another who is strong of limb wastes his life and suffers as if he is in hell. God loves everybody alike. Happiness does not depend upon what we are. He must draw our hearts to Him and it is then that we are happy.

When Ramdas was taken out of his old life and made to roam all over India with only a wearing cloth

and with no money in hand, he must have appeared to others a very unhappy man. But he was very happy. Happiness does not consist in having comforts. We can be happy in any condition. External circumstances are not responsible for one's joy or grief. The mind is responsible. It depends upon our mental attitude to life. The mind should ever be in the contemplation of God. Even that blind Sadhu praised God for His mercy. He glorified God and said, 'I am blessed.'

14th April 1961.

Ramdas: The ultimate object of meditation is to still the mind. A still mind gives you the knowledge that you are He, that you are the Self. As long as the mind wanders, you cannot know that you are the Self. You talk, act and do everything feeling that you are the body, because you are in a state of ignorance. You can act even after knowing that you are the Self, free from all desires. Otherwise you worry about the future and the past and fret about the present.

Stilling the mind is not a joke. Thoughts rush in and out. The people who have not gone through any discipline for control of mind cannot meditate. When the mind is thought-free there is only the divine consciousness, the awareness of the Self. An active mind makes us think that we are the body and not the Self. For control of mind, the Gita says that there must be practice and dispassion. The seeker is after eternal peace. But his mind is after worldly pleasures which are transitory and are always attended with pain. When the mind is disgusted with them, it recoils. In that state it is easy to draw the mind within and fix it on the Divine. Then it becomes still.

Q : To still the mind, it should be concentrated on what?

Ramdas: On any symbol of God. You must have something representing God to concentrate upon, giving it His impersonal attributes. This process will take you beyond the object concentrated upon. For instance, although you worship only an image, the attributes you give it are of the absolute Truth. You cannot think of the Absolute, the abstract, without some symbol. If you want to go upstairs you require a flight of stairs. After going up there is no need for the steps. You can think only in terms of name and form. When your mind is thoroughly concentrated, the object and the subject become one. Then you are aware that you are the absolute Being.

You can concentrate either on an image, light or sound as a symbol of God. Ramdas found the Name the best for this purpose. You cannot have always and everywhere with you an image or a light. But you can take God's name anywhere—you can have it always with you. The sound of God's name is called Sabda Brahman. When you practise repetition of the Name, taking sound as Brahman or Truth, you transcend the Name or sound and realize Brahman. Already you are that. Then you are the happiest being on earth. All other desire are replaced by the one desire for God and that desires also disappears after God-realization. Such a desireless state is the result of your awareness of the Self. You have then no craving for the things of the world. Having found the source of eternal bliss within, you are ever happy.

Man's quest is for eternal happiness and peace. When you attain this you will not hanker after worldly

things any longer. This supreme state is held before us as the goal of life by saints and sages all over the world.

Q : The mind refuses to go in, and wanders about.

Ramdas: When it gets the taste of the Name and enjoys calmness, it will slowly become concentrated. When you are chanting the Name, you will find a strange attraction for the sound and you will enjoy divine peace. You have allowed the mind to run amuck for several years. Only gradually you can control it by listening to the sound of the Name — the Name of one whom you love with all your heart. Then the sound of the Name will be sweet to your ears and the mind will not wander.

When the snake-charmer plays on the pipe, the snake is attracted by the sound and it does not move about. So when you practise listening to the sound of Gods' name, the mind will refuse to run about because of the charm in the sound of the Name.

Q : How many hours are we to spend in meditation?

Ramdas: There is no question of 'how many hours.' You have to do it as long as possible. There is no time limit set to it. Ramdas started taking the Name for one or two hours a day. Afterwards he could not give it up. He was enjoying supreme bliss of the Name all the twentyfour hours. He did not catch the Name; the Name caught him. So he was automatically repeating the Name and was drinking the nectar of it through the ears.

You must adopt one of these methods of concentration. Ramdas found the sound to be the easiest.

Sing God's name slowly to yourself. You will find that the roving mind ceases to wander and gets absorbed in the sound. Then you will rise above the sound into a super-conscious state. The nature of the Atman is pure bliss. In fact, nectar is nothing beside it. Your whole being will be filled with pure ecstasy, peace and joy.

This pure bliss cannot be had after just a few days' practice. You must chant the Name continuously and feel that God's grace is on you. You must have strength and inspiration from Him. Grace is there always. Only you must be conscious of it. Everything you do is, as a matter of fact, according to His will. The feeling that *you* are doing everything will go after your surrender is complete. You must feel from the core of your being that He does everything. The practice of concentration, meditation and surrender is done in order to annihilate the egosense. Sadhana is intended to remove the veil which hides the Truth that is within. So the Atman is not anything to be attained. You have only to be aware of it.

The mind is nothing but a bundle of desires. When those desires go, the mind ceases to be. The veil is removed. Then your Atman shines out in its pristine purity and lustre.

Q : When we attain divine knowledge our illusion and doubts disappear.

Ramdas: Yes. It is ignorance which causes all fears, anxieties and doubts.

Q : Why did God create human beings?

Ramdas: That is not the question. The question is how to free ourselves from the bondage of desires. A

bird is caught in a cage and it thinks for itself, 'Who put me in the cage and why? For how many years have I been here?' If it thinks like this, its whole life will be wasted in captivity and no release can come. 'How to get out?' ought to be the one problem for it. If it sees a small loop-hole somewhere, at once it will get out.

Similarly, you find that you are covered by a veil. It is for you to cast it off. You can do it at once and say, 'I am birthless and deathless.' But the worldly objects attract you so much that you have not the will to do so. You have created your own bondage. Know that the power to free yourself is within you. You are your own friend and your own enemy. When you throw off the veil, you are your own friend; if not, you are your own enemy.

Q : Which is the method — Faith or Love?

Ramdas: Have faith in the words of the Master and then follow his advice. The Master tells you that you are the Truth, the immortal Spirit. This you accept intellectually. If you have faith in the path shown by him and follow it, you will reach the goal. Otherwise you can never succeed. The Master tells you from his own experience. If you act according to his guidance you are sure to get there.

Ramdas' Guru told him, 'My son, repeat this Mantra always — SRI RAM JAI RAM JAI JAI RAM — and you will attain immortal bliss.' What did he say? 'Repeat the Name *always*.' Ramdas thought, 'always' meant 'twentyfour hours'. So all work had to drop off. If he did anything else it could not be 'always.' He would not then be following strictly the Guru's instruction. Day and night he repeated the Name,

and he found God because he had implicit faith in his Master's words. People said that Ramdas was going too far in his Sadhana. To tell you the truth, as a result of continuous repetition of Ramnam, Ramdas was saturated physically and mentally with bliss. That is why he could not but always smile and smile.

15th April 1961.

Ramdas: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not Love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.

"Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not Love, it profiteth me nothing.

"Love never faileth; but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.

"And now abideth faith, hope, Love, these three; but the greatest of these is Love." — I Cor.xiii.

"We have been accustomed to be told that the greatest thing in religious world is Faith. Well, we are wrong. I have taken you, in the chapter which I have just read, to Christianity at its source; and there we have seen, 'The greatest of these is Love'."

These passages are from the book 'The greatest thing in the world' by Henry Drummond. See the glory of true Love. Ramdas has read these passages hundreds of times. This love is based upon the knowledge of the Self. When you have this love, tenderness shines out of your eyes. See the picture of Ramana Maharshi on the wall. Ramdas is ever fond of looking at his eyes. Faith

has been looked upon as the greatest thing in the world. The greatest thing, however, is Love, not faith.

We must try to live it — make a sincere effort to live the life filled with Love. If you bear Love in your heart, the 'Ten Commandments' are automatically observed.

Q : His disciples asked Jesus Christ which was the greatest commandment of all. He replied: 'Love the Lord with all thy might; Love thy neighbour as thyself.'

Ramdas: Love is the power which enables you to fulfil the "Ten Commandments". Whatever you have achieved by spiritual discipline is useless if you have not Love.

Q : All that a saint has to do is to look at us with his tender eyes. It is better than a million lectures.

Ramdas: You are right. People hear spiritual discourses and praise the lecturer. 'Oh, you spoke so beautifully. It was all so inspiring.' And then they go their own way. That is not the thing.

Q : Papa, the faces of all the saints I have visited in India have one thing reflected on them — the same compassion, the same love.

Ramdas: True disciples have inherited the glory of their Masters. When you look to them for guidance, for inspiration, you grow into their likeness. The same virtues are revealed in you. Therefore you must cherish great ideals. Your ideals must be the highest, of which saints are embodiments. They redeem mankind.

Q : By keeping company of a saint, one becomes a saint.

Ramdas: In the company of a sandalwood tree an ordinary tree becomes a sandalwood tree. Association is the cause. There was a parrot in the house of a saint. If anybody went inside the house, it would say, 'Come along. Come along. You are welcome. We are happy to see you.' There was a parrot in the house of a robber. If anybody went there, it would say, 'I will cut you to pieces. I will kill you.' So, your nature is developed according to the company you keep. By holy company you become holy; by unholy company you become unholy.

Q : It is said that environment is stronger than will.

Ramdas: Narada was the son of a maidservant in a Brahmin's house. He was serving four learned and pious Mahatmas. Sometimes he was eating the leavings of their food. By their association and blessings he became a devotee of Lord Vishnu and rose to great spiritual eminence. Sometimes, even a momentary contact produces a wonderful change. Such was the case with Valmiki when he came into contact with a saint.

17th April 1961.

Q : In Ashtavakra Gita it is stated in the beginning that all is Brahman. Brahman alone is real. In a subsequent chapter it is said that the world is a manifestation of Brahman. How to reconcile these two statements?

Ramdas: In the Sadhana period you look upon the world as an illusion. The world does not exist, as it were, for you. After realization the world is seen no longer as the world but as Brahman. Vairagya will make you indifferent to the objects of the world completely when

you are a Sadhaka. If you want to realize Brahman, the world for the time being must be non-existent for you. In that state it is perfectly right if you say that the world is an illusion.

When you call everything as Brahman, there is only one Reality and there is none other; forms have no meaning for you. When Ramdas tells you that everything is He, he speaks of Nirguna Brahman. You are concerned only with that. Forms are as good as non-existent for you. When you identify any object with Brahman, the object as such bears no significance.

Q : If there is only one, where is the point in saying 'everything'?

Ramdas: It is for the purpose of teaching. Otherwise you will never be able to express anything. There is nothing to talk about. When you talk for the understanding of others who see diversity, it is to be put in this way. From the standpoint of the Sadhaka it is spoken. सर्व खल्विदं ब्रह्म says the Siddha to the Sadhaka. By such teaching the sense of diversity is lost.

Ramdas has said very often how he passed through the stage of illusion and then came to the stage where he saw everything as Brahman. This is the way how you progress in your Sadhana. When you are in Suddha Sattwa you come to feel that everything is Brahman. Still, that state is not permanent. It may come and go. When you transcend Suddha Sattwa and realize the Atman, your vision is permanent, unchanging. Now you get perfect equanimity. Suddha Sattwa gives you a relative experience of oneness. It is not a lasting one. When Rajo-guna or Tamo-guna rises, you lose it. Then by force of your Sadhana you regain it. But you are still

in the clutches of the Gunas. There is yet a screen between you and Brahman. When that screen is removed, you will find that the experience is permanent. The realization is not complete when you are in Suddha Sattwa. When you have realized Brahman, you have gone beyond the Gunas. You have realized the Absolute.

Q : If, in that state, the realized soul does not see a second one, where is the scope for life?

Ramdas: Seeing yourself in everybody is life. You have no hate and no attachment. Then what have you? Only love based upon your oneness with all. Activities then are expressions of love. There is no 'another' for you. Apparently there are many, but you see only yourself everywhere. Realizing everybody as yourself is to love. There, Jnana and Bhakti meet. That is Para Bhakti.

Q : A pure mind is Sattwic. A realized soul has no mind. The mind disappears when you realize the Truth.

Ramdas: Yes. When the veil goes, there is no mind as such. Sri Ramakrishna says that a still and purified mind and the Atman are one and the same. The soul is then not an individual entity; it is universal Consciousness. You have then realized the Self. Guru's grace comes and removes the ignorance. Sadhana must be done; there is no other way.

Q : Who is doing the Sadhana?

Ramdas: It is only at the end of Sadhana you may ask that question. You can say it when you reach the destination. Till then you have to struggle to reach it.

Q : If the Sadhaka were to look upon the world as illusory, is it an experience or is it for Sadhana?

Ramdas: Experience is the outcome of Sadhana. Still the waves of the mind and see the Atman. After attaining the Atman you see that all this is Brahman. Jnana is an intermediate experience. That is how Ramdas felt. In his preamble to the book 'In the Vision of God' Ramdas has explained this:

"His mind was merged in a unique stillness of peace; his life was one of unreserved self-surrender; and as regards the world, in a sense it was not there for him, that is, he was dead, as it were, to the world. He was travelling from place to place like an automaton, as if in a dream, indifferent to — nay, unconscious of — his body and environments.

"He experienced that he was living and moving in a new world in which he felt that there was none other than himself and his great master — Ram — his all in all. In fact, he had neither attraction nor repulsion for the world. It was simply a wonderful state. He was perfectly fearless. Love and hate, like and dislike, conveyed no meaning for him. In brief, he could be likened to a dry leaf tossed at random as the wind of divine will listed.

"The vision then was mainly internal. A stage was soon reached when this dwelling in the Spirit became a permanent and unvarying experience, with no more falling off from it, and then a still more exalted state came on; his hitherto inner vision projected outward. First a glimpse of this new vision dazzled him off and on. This was the work of divine Love. He would feel as though his very soul had expanded like the blossoming of a flower and, by a flash as it were, enveloped the whole universe, embracing all in a subtle halo of love and

light. This experience granted him a bliss infinitely greater than he had in the previous state. Now it was that Ramdas began to cry out, 'Ram is all, it is He as everybody and everything.' "

18th April, 1961.

Ramdas: Attachment even to the person of the Guru is a hindrance. It is a bondage. You must transcend it. It may be useful in the beginning to free yourself from attachment to other things. But that is not the end. That attachment must also go, in order to realize the Self. You must look upon everybody as your Guru. When you lay aside your ego and see, you find everywhere your Guru. As a matter of fact, Guru is Nirguna. As the mind cannot grasp the Nirguna, He manifests Himself in form. Your goal is to realize the Self or Atman. Atman is the Nirguna Swarup of the Guru.

If you have intense love for one, you have intense hate towards another. You must transcend both. Hate and love refer to the form only.

Q : We meditate on the form of our Guru. Is it bad?

Ramdas: That also must go. The sense of separation must go. Go within and become one with Brahman. Through meditation only it is possible for anybody to realize Brahman. Afterwards you will see Brahman everywhere.

20th April, 1961.

Q : Sri Ramana, for Atma Nishta, says:

पवन चलन रोधात् आत्मनिष्ठो भव त्वं ।

There are many sorts of Pranayam — breath-control. Which sort of Pranayam does he talk of?

Ramdas: Ramdas' main Sadhana was Ramnam; that is all. Ramdas felt, when he was repeating Ramnam continuously, there was automatic breath-control. Everybody is breathing, but it is irregular.

When you chant Ramnam in a particular tune at a particular speed, the breathing goes on in a regulated manner. The same is the case when you meditate. The breathing automatically stops; then slowly exhalation starts; then comes gradual inhalation. The process of breathing goes on very slowly. The mind becomes perfectly calm. By such gradual and steady practice the mind is finally stilled and you become conscious of your Self. Stilling the mind is the means for the elimination of Vasanas.

When a child, just four or five months old, is quietly lying down, you watch how rhythmically it breathes. It is always smiling and playful. Anybody can take it in his arms; it sees no difference in persons. When it begins to move about and talk, its lurking Vasanas come into life and its mind gradually grows restless. So we have to regain the state of a child which we have lost.

Ramdas was not noticing his breath at first. Later on he found it was mysteriously controlled and harmonized. Mantra Japa regulates the breath automatically. That is why they say Japa must be done of only one Mantra and that in a particular tune and speed so that the breath may be regulated. When you change the Mantra, tune or speed, the breathing becomes irregular.

Mouna also helps in calming the mind. When you talk too much the mind is in a whirl. External Mouna gives you internal Mouna or stillness of the mind. The purpose of Mouna is this. It is not mere mechanical control of speech.

All Sadhanas are intended to still the mind and finally eliminate it in order to become established in the Self. The test of right Sadhana is attainment of joy. By Pranayam some people make the mind blank; they deaden it. There is no such thing as fixing the mind on God. That does not help. Ramdas was initiated by a Yogi into a method of Pranayam which he practised for six months. His mind became quite blank and still. There was no joy in it. It took him nowhere. He then discontinued the practice with great difficulty. It took him a month to free himself from it and return to the repetition of Ramnam. Then he felt joy as well as the stillness of mind. Pranayam involves great strain. Any Sadhana which produces strain must be avoided. After all, Sadhana is a means to an end. This should not be forgotten. When the end is gained, Sadhana automatically ceases.

While Ramdas was at Kasaragod, two women — votaries of Ramnam — came to him. They had been repeating Ramnam continuously for several years; they had taken a vow to repeat it at all times. They both developed a severe headache. They were suffering intense pain and approached Ramdas for a remedy. Ramdas found they were chanting Ramnam continuously with great strain in order to keep their vow. Although they had attained stillness of mind they continued the practice. Hence the strain and headache. Ramdas asked them to stop the practice. They did so.

When they came to Ramdas after a week, he found they were quite happy and free from the headache.

Unless it gives you joy, it is no Sadhana. When you feel any strain you should stop it. Pranayam, meditation or any spiritual practice will do serious harm if you tire yourself out in the process.

23rd April 1961.

Ramdas: There are three classes of human beings in the world. A fisherman casts his net in the sea. Some fish do not get caught at all. Some get caught, but somehow, after some struggle, they escape. Some are caught and remain in the net to the last; they fall into the hands of the fisherman. In like manner, some persons, from their very birth, never get involved in Samsara; they are called Janma Siddhas. Some persons struggle to become free. They aspire to enjoy eternal bliss and peace. They approach a Guru, get the necessary instructions and do the proper Sadhana. They are Sadhakas. When they finally realize the Self, they are called Jivan Muktas. The third class of persons are the Baddhas. They do not aspire to realize God. They die after undergoing untold miseries and sufferings. They are born again and again and live the same old life of bondage and ignorance.

It is not merely by Vichara that the mind turns towards God. We know which is real and which is false, yet we do not give up the false. Intellectually we know, but our minds do not turn towards Truth unless some force is awakened within. Next step is to court the society of saints who have realized the Truth; who are spiritually perfect. Grace of saints and grace of God within are one

and the same. By grace we become Mumukshus or aspirants for God-realization.

Q : So, no one can blame the third class of fish (caught in the net).

Ramdas: The ignorant man, when he is awakened within, comes into contact with saints and ultimately realizes the Self. There is hope for him also.

According to Christianity and some other faiths, if he dies in ignorance, he will be cast into eternal hell. According to Hinduism, he will be given birth after birth until finally, through divine grace, he strives for liberation and attains eternal bliss and peace.

Q : Why is it there are two theories about life after death — hell and heaven? .

Ramdas: The ignorant man is unable to realize the Truth in this life due to many circumstances over which he has no control, and after death he is cast into hell. This Christian theory does not seem to be acceptable. He must be given more chances. Some people live like animals and die, without having any urge at all for a higher spiritual life. Even if you bring them into contact with a saint, the saint's influence has no effect upon them. Do you mean to say they should be cast into eternal hell? Ignorance is no crime. Ignorance should be pitied rather than condemned. Is not God all love and compassion?

Q : What have you to say about fate or destiny?

Ramdas: Destiny is the result of your own past actions. In the earlier life you have done something bad and you reap the results as determined by that action.

But destiny is not all in all. God's grace can alter or annul destiny. That is the redeeming factor. A devotee is not afraid of destiny. He will either be freed from suffering caused by it or he will be given enough strength to bear suffering and transmute it into joy.

So live a good life. Be free, cheerful and happy like a child. Let your heart flow to everybody in love, compassion and mercy. That is why you are in the world. Why should you bother about your past? Take care of the present. Life is intended to be divinized. You are like animals if you live only for gratification of the senses. If you transcend such a life, you rise to the human plane, where you avoid what is wrong and do what is right. You then struggle for God-realization and go beyond the human plane into the divine plane. You become a God-man. To reach that state is the purpose of human life. You must subdue the animal tendencies. The man who has realized the Divine is a saint. He is of great help to struggling humanity because he can guide them to spiritual perfection. That is attained only after realizing the Atman and looking upon the whole universe as the manifestation of the Atman.

The last prayer that we repeat at Bhajan in the Ashram is:

असतो मा सद्गमय । तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय । मृत्योर्मा अमृतं गमय ।

'Lead me from the unreal to the Real; lead me from darkness to Light; lead me from death to Immortality.'

God is real, God is light, God is immortal. We live in darkness, in the clutches of Maya. We are living in the unreal and we are subject to mortality. We are afraid

of death because we think we are the body. If we know that we are the Atman, then the fear ceases.

You are the Truth. You are deathless. Atman, the divine Spirit within you, is all-pervading. He and you are one तत् त्वं असि 'That Thou Art,' that is the teaching of the Rishis. Realize that. Then the false identification with the body disappears.

Q : In Tibet, operation is done at the centre between the eyebrows—Shiva's third eye—in order to attain certain Siddhis.

Ramdas: Ramdas never heard of it. They say [Ida, Pingala and Sushumna meet at that centre — Ajna Chakra — and the knot there should break by the power of Yoga, through the grace of the Guru. Then Kundalini will rise to Sahasrara and the Sadhaka attains liberation. That is according to Yoga Shastras in which it is said that you have to concentrate on this centre between eyebrows. It is the fire or light centre.

Q : What was Papa's centre of concentration?

Ramdas: Ramdas' point of concentration was between the eyebrows. This he did according to the advice of the Yogi who initiated him into Pranayam. Concentration on a certain centre is only for the beginner. Otherwise, God is all-pervading; He is everywhere. Ramdas was steeped in God-thought. Mental repetition of Ramnam went on. Love, compassion and mercy are developed in the heart. When the mind becomes more and more absorbed in God, selfish emotions disappear and all cravings for sense enjoyments cease. Then the heart becomes pure with divine emotions.

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ For the realized soul, heart is important. Love flows out from it. But for a Sadhaka, head centre is more important. Concentration, meditation, retention of breath — all these things happen in the upper regions. Intellect is located there.

This question was put to Sri Ramana by somebody, ‘What do you recommend for concentration — heart centre or centre between the eyebrows?’ He replied, ‘Either this or that.’ In the heart they generally visualise the image of God.

In Buddhism there are various kinds of meditation. Pure Buddhism you do not find in these days. There are in it many creeds and sects. They do not agree with one another. In Japan they worship many images of Devas among which you will find one of Buddha also. Buddha never asked us to worship Devas or Gods. He preached the purest religion without any rituals, sacrifices, etc. In fact, he condemned ritualistic religion. Christianity and Hinduism too have degenerated. They have many unholy practices. They say it is permitted by Shastras. You must only take the essence of the Shastras and try to follow it. Your spiritual practices must make you break all barriers between God and yourself. Thus you will really be free by realizing the Self. That is true religion. If you go to the source you will find that all is one and you will get over all distinctions.

You look upon yourself as an individual separate from the world and God — Jiva, God and Jagat as three entities. These are veils of separation. The aim of religion is to tear asunder these veils created by man. God never created them. You must be as God made

you — innocent, pure, guileless, like a child, freely mingling with everyone, regardless of caste, creed, colour, etc.

When you once get the experience of a state beyond all relative existence, then you cannot lose it. That is what everybody is struggling to attain. Experience or Anubhava is realization, direct cognition of Reality. There is no question of losing it at any time.

Q : If everybody realized God, there will be no world.

Ramdas: So you are not in a hurry to realize. Do you think the world will crumble to pieces? Is that the fear which makes you hesitate? Why do you think of the world? God will look after it. You take care of yourself.

Q : Is it possible for me to realize if I am unhealthy?

Ramdas: Do you not take food, go to office and attend to several other things? What kind of ill-health have you? For meditation, remembrance of God or taking His name there is illness. Even if you are bed-ridden you attend to many things.

Q : Work in the office will not be perfect.

Ramdas: Remembrance of God also might go on imperfectly during your ill-health. All the time you will be trying to get cured by proper treatment. 'I am ill. Still I am going to the office and taking medicines,' you say. In the same way, in spite of illness, you can remember God and meditate on Him. If bed-ridden, then also you can think of God.

Yesterday, Ramdas got a letter from C. about her mother who is almost on death-bed. She is doing Japa

of Ram even in that state. She does not say, 'I am ill, I cannot do any Japa.' She is sinking, still she is remembering God.

It is because people do not feel the need for God, they offer lame excuses: 'I have no time, I come home late, and I have also to do some office work at home. I work till 11 o'clock and then go to bed. How can I get up at 4 o'clock and meditate?' If they are promised some extra remuneration, they will gladly undertake additional work. That shows how genuine is their aspiration for God. When there is demand, supply will come. If there is no demand, no supply will come. God must become a definite need of the soul. Some work all day long and still find time in the morning to meditate with cheer and enthusiasm. Meditation is a tonic not only to the soul but also to the body.

Q : Illness of the body is caused by past Karma.

Ramdas: Karma or not, you do your best to free yourself from the illness. You had better take the necessary medicine for it. Whether it is past Karma or present Karma, when the doctor asks about the history of your case, you give it. You then take the medicine he prescribes for you. You do not worry why the illness was caused.

Q : If one has implicit faith in God, no medicine is necessary.

Ramdas: There are faith cures also. But everybody cannot have faith; then medicine is necessary. Some people are foolhardy. They do not observe even ordinary rules of health and God cures them once and for all! That is the way God disposes of such persons.

24th April, 1961.

Q : Does outer silence lead to inner silence?

Ramdas: Outer silence may helpful in attaining inner silence. Outer silence alone is not the thing. There are so many who have outer silence and no inner silence. You may talk and still have inner silence. Outer silence is helpful when your mind is engaged in meditation. Talk disturbs. Mental practice of Japa leads to meditation and keeps the mind silent. That is a Sadhana. Many rules have to be observed for control of mind; observance of silence is one of them. Who is observing silence? Let us try to find out.

Q : The Self.

Ramdas: Does the Self require silence? It is always silent. Do you refer to the lower or higher self?

Q : Combined.

Ramdas: When have they come together? You say, 'My body, my mind, my intellect.' So you are not the body, etc; but you possess those things. Who is that 'I' who says these things? The same is said by another also. He also is different from those things. He also says 'I'. Thus every one says 'I'. That means the body is not the 'I' in your case as well as in everybody's case.

When your body is beaten, you say, 'I am beaten. That is wrong identification. Still you say 'My body.' That means, you are not the body. Who is that who says, 'My body?'

Q : Soul.

Ramdas: What do you mean by 'soul'? Where is he? Where is he not? Is the soul in you and not in another?

Q : The soul is in everybody.

Ramdas: Are there many souls? Is this 'I' individual or universal?

Q : It is the same in everybody. It is not an individual entity.

Ramdas: That means you are the universal Self or Infinite Self. You are not the body. You have a body. Is it not so? Are there many eternal Selves or 'one only'?

Q : One only.

Ramdas: Why not two or more?

Q : There can be only one Infinite, one Eternal.

Ramdas: In some philosophies you will find God and the devotee. The devotee is eternal and God is eternal. They are not the same, but different. Can you conceive of that? You cannot. It is not a matter of mere conception. Actually there cannot be two eternals. If there are two, one is unreal and the other is real. You are concerned only with the real and eternal. And you are That. And this body is unreal in the sense that it passes away, or it only appears to exist. So you are eternal, is it not so? Then, why do you bother? There the matter ends.

Q : But the mind deludes.

Ramdas: You are not the mind, you are the immortal Self. Then why do you bother?

Q : Suppose the body is wounded, then I get pain.

Ramdas: Then the *body* is affected; you are not the body. You are changeless and blissful. The Greek philosopher Epictetus, who was a slave, rightly said, 'I am not lame, my leg is lame.'

Q : I must be able to stand the test now.

Ramdas: Who is to stand the test, Atman?

Q : But there must be that consciousness.

Ramdas: Atman is Consciousness itself.

Q : What about hunger, thirst, etc?

Ramdas: It is for the body, not for you. Therefore you say, 'When the body dies, I do not die.'

Q : This is an intellectual conviction.

Ramdas: Who has intellectual conviction?

Q : Ego.

Ramdas: There is no ego. There is only Atman. When you think you are the body, then the question of ego arises. When you are the eternal Self, where comes the question of the body? When you know that you are the eternal Self, where is the question of the ego? Now you have found out who you are in reality.

25th April, 1961.

Ramdas: NS. has found out a new form of surrender by which he throws all responsibility on Ramdas and he will do whatever he likes.

Q : Is he not Papa's child?

Ramdas: Who says he is not?

Q : Then, is not all responsibility on Papa, his Guru?

Ramdas: Do you mean to say that Ramdas is responsible even if he robs or kills anybody? For his action, is Ramdas to take the punishment?

Q : When he is a child, he does not know what is right or wrong, and therefore how can he be responsible?

Ramdas: If he is a child he will not do like that.

Q : That is why I first asked, 'Is he not Papa's child?'

Ramdas: So far as Ramdas is concerned he is Ramdas' child. But *he* must feel he is a child and should act like a child. Then only Ramdas' responsibility holds good. Therefore it is said, 'We must become like a child and then the father will give us proper protection.' To become like a child means to be conscious of being a child.

Q : If a child falls into a well, the child suffers, no doubt, but is not the father much more pained?

Ramdas: Of course, the father feels sorrow. If God does not feel for His children, they have no hope. You must be conscious of your actual surrender to God. You must be conscious of His guidance and control from within and that it is by His will and power you are doing everything.

Q : That amounts to saying that we are only dolls in His hands.

Ramdas: Consciously we are dancing to His tune. Puppet is not conscious. An intelligent being, when conscious that God from within is making him dance, is dancing well. That dancing gives him joy. We must be aware that we have surrendered. In that lies our joy. Ultimately the dancer is He and the Master is also He. Until this non-dual awareness is ours, we must be conscious that He is manipulating us from within. Otherwise, we think that we do everything. There, we do not have

that joy. You can take a pen and write a beautiful poem; the pen cannot appreciate it. We are not like the pen. We are conscious beings. We can know He makes us do everything. There is joy and ecstasy in that. It is not of the intellect. It is something beyond it. It is a matter of divine experience. In a subtle way, from within, we are being made to work.

A master has a servant who is willing to do whatever the master directs him to do, and he finds joy in doing it. He will be joyfully expecting orders from him. He is conscious that he is doing things according to the master's instructions. In carrying out the master's orders he feels supreme joy. So it is with the devotee. The Master is within. Our joy consists in obeying Him.

When the fan is to be switched on, Ramdas quietly gets up and does it. There are many present in the room. They feel they are denied that service. When Ramdas asks them to do it, they do it most happily — this you can see from their faces: 'Papa is kindly asking me to do something for him.' It is a practical experience. Mataji is very much upset when Ramdas goes and does anything when she is present. 'You could have asked somebody else to do it,' she says. Sometimes Ramdas does things himself. The friends by his side do not appreciate it. Doing things to please the master without expecting anything in return is selfless service. It is done out of pure love. It yields great joy.

Even when the master scolds you, it gives you joy if the scolding is taken in good part. At times, when the master does not scold you, you feel sad. You complain, 'My master did not abuse me this time.' At Akalkot there was a saint. He used to abuse his devotees daily.

For some days he was not in a mood to abuse. He was sitting quiet. A devotee came to him but was not abused. He missed the abuse. He had visited the saint on a previous occasion. He had then been abused which was a matter for joy to him. Such was his love for the master.

There was a Sadhu who owned paddy fields, which he cultivated every year and the produce was utilized for the distribution of food to hundreds of poor people. Once there were very heavy rains after the sowing work in the fields was over. If the rain water rushed into the fields, all the seedlings would be washed away. The Sadhu sent one of his devotees to see the condition of the fields. He went there and found that water had begun to rush in through a gap in the bund. He at once lay himself down in the gap and stopped the water-flow. The Sadhu thought, 'What has become of him? One hour has passed. Still he has not come back.' After a search he was found in the field in the condition described above. After the rain and the flow of water stopped, he returned to his master. The crop was thus saved.

Suppose a saint gives up his body and is permanently separated from his devotees, the true devotee would feel the saint is guiding him from within and he works in a free and cheerful spirit. First it is a state of outside surrender. Inner surrender follows and he then acts spontaneously. He is always blissful. Spontaneity means bliss. If I-ness is there, spontaneity and joy are not there. When we know the Atman, the ego disappears and the stream of bliss flows out. It is a natural state. It is the ego that spoils everything.

Q: Is Brahmacharya very essential for God-realization?

Ramdas: As Ramdas understands it — according to his experience — it is essential.

Q: Up to what state?

Ramdas: What is real Brahmacharya? Living and acting in Brahman. Everything is Brahman. There is no question of duality there. The idea of sex is the outcome of duality. When duality disappears, sex-desire is extinguished, because in duality only that desire exists. Some people would say that desire for eating, talking, hearing, etc., also is like sex-desire. No, that is for merely maintaining the body. But the one thing that keeps us pinned to duality is sex-desire. The most important Sadhana for one who wants to attain Brahma-Jnana is Brahmacharya. It is not mere continence. It is sublimation of sex-energy. Sex-energy is the essence of your body. If that is sublimated, then it is that Self-realization becomes possible. The man who observes Brahmacharya — not merely physical but mental also — and allows that energy to be assimilated in the body, alone knows the bliss of that state. He radiates light and joy, because he lives in Brahman. You can see a halo round his head.

Lust, wrath and greed are your enemies. First is lust. The other evils come from that root. Therefore, Lord Shiva turned lust into ashes. Buddha's Mara and Jesus' Satan are the same. The greatest temptation is sex. Man rises to a certain height and falls through this temptation. He cannot resist it. Children have no thought of sex. See how cheerful and blissful they are. When sex-thought enters, they are altogether different. Spontaneity goes; cheerfulness, innocence, purity, all disappear. So we are told, 'Unless and until we become

like children we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.' Attainment of inner freedom, peace and bliss is the kingdom of heaven. Formerly heaven was considered to be somewhere in the skies. Jesus used the word 'heaven' in a new sense. He said, 'The kingdom of heaven is within you.' It is the kingdom of happiness.

Who is happy? One who is of pure mind, not the one who is prey to lust, greed and wrath. So we are asked to subdue these enemies. Buddha has taught that we should be pure in thought, word and deed. Purity of mind is freedom from desire. When the mind is pure, words and actions will be pure automatically. So, emphasis is laid upon mental purity. From an impure mind you cannot have pure words and actions. As the mind is, so your words and actions are. 'Blessed is he who is pure in heart, because he shall see God.'

Q: Is restriction of sleep and food necessary for realization of Self?

Ramdas: Surely. By the restriction of sleep and diet you will be able to control the mind and attain purity. Too much sleep means too much food and *vice versa*. It is a vicious circle. The Gita says:

युक्ताहारविहारस्य युक्तचेष्टस्य कर्मसु ।

युक्तस्वप्नावबोधस्य योगो भवति दुःखहा ।

'Yoga, which frees one from all misery, is attained only by him who is moderate in diet and recreation, regulated in performing actions, and in sleeping and waking.' (vi-17)

Q: What about solitude?

Ramdas: If you feel the need for it you can go to solitude. Everything depends upon how you feel about

it. You cannot have any hard and fast rule applicable to all alike.

You must experiment on yourself as to how you can control your mind. You must not allow the mind to run riot. Reason must be used in your attempt to control the mind. When the mind prompts you to do a wrong thing, you must have the firmness to say, 'No.' Man acts as dictated by the mind with a view to enjoy sense-pleasures. Reason is not used there. You do things impulsively and afterwards repent of what you have done. That should not be. Reasoning faculty must be used. It is better to be always intellectually awake and employ reason in order to see whether you are doing the right thing or not, whether what you do is good for your spiritual evolution or not. That which takes you towards God, you must accept; that which takes you away from God, you must reject. You can know it by experience. For instance, when you take more food you feel sleepy. Your mind refuses to be calm. The same is the case when you sleep too much. You learn the lesson and then regulate sleep and food. You have to make experiments after experiments. Sages have given rules for your guidance. By following them you can progress well on the path.

Q : Papa has given some hints in 'At the Feet of God.'

Ramdas: They are from Ramdas' personal experience. Not from books. He was experimenting and learning how to get control over the mind. Those experiences, written on loose sheets of paper, were collected together and printed in the form of the book. So spiritual aspirants find the book very helpful.

Q : Is it possible to destroy the ego consciously or does it drop off by itself?

Ramdas: How do you destroy darkness? By bringing light. So, ego can go by continuously remembering God who is within your heart. When you tune your mind with the all-pervading Truth, the individuality will melt away. There is no need to fight with the ego. Fighting will only strengthen it. When the ego is humble, you experience ecstasy. Whenever you think of the Atman, take It as the all-pervading Reality. Then this individual, limited ego-sense will automatically disappear. Light dispels darkness. Know you are the immortal Self and the ego vanishes. You find afterwards that it never existed. Positive method is the way. You should not have any tussle with the ego. When you transcend your mind or when the mind is still, you know that you are the Self, and you see the ego was not there at all. Actually there is only the Self and nothing but the Self. He is all, and all in all. Ego is illusion, pure and simple. This you understand when you realize the Self. The thing that never existed was frightening you all along. We give it life or existence just as we superimpose the snake on the rope. The truth is, 'I am He सः ॥; That Thou Art तत् त्वं असि; Verily, everything is Brahman सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म ॥'

Q : Does the Guru look after the progress of devotees?

Ramdas: The Buddhists say, 'Buddha shows the way. You have to enter the path and walk yourselves on it.' The Guru is there to tell you that God is within you, and he shows the way to find Him. The simplest method is chanting the Name and freeing the mind

from restlessness. Name stands for Self or God. 'Ram', for Ramdas, has nothing to do with any form or image. 'Ram' is simply a Name — not the name of any Avatar, but of Self or Brahman. When he was chanting Ramnam, he was chanting the name of his own Self, so that he might be awakened to the consciousness of his Self. After you have realized the Self you transcend even the Name. The difficulty at the early stage is to control the mind which is running after the objects of the senses. The Name does that work. The Name is not of somebody who is far away. It is of our own Self. Therefore the result is immediate.

You think God is outside you. If you, from the very start, think of God as dwelling within you and take the Name, you will find that the mind automatically sinks within and is lost, with the result that you realize the Self. Mind is a very turbulent fellow and cannot be subjugated by a few days' practice. Keep this central idea in your mind that you are seeking your own Self. At the end of the search you find that you were searching for yourself and that you are He. Till then you were thinking you were separate from Him. Repetition of God's name, meditation and other Sadhanas are done only to realize that you are He. If you do not know this, your struggle is protracted, because you are going the wrong way. You go about here and there, do many things and find you have made no progress. The technique is wrong.

Ramdas' case was unique. In fact, his hunger for God was created by Him only — Ramdas had absolutely no idea of it before. God was guiding him in all matters. Strangely enough the path he followed tallied perfectly with the path indicated in the Shastras. Ramdas had no

initiative of his own. Everything that ought to be done was done by him, as if he was so doing according to instructions given to him. Even his Guru never gave him any instruction other than to repeat Ramnam.

Ramdas did all Sadhanas with a view to having the Name always on his tongue. He felt the inner guidance. 'Why are you doing all this?' people would ask. 'God told him to do so,' was his reply. 'Why do you fast?' — 'God makes him fast.' That was his only reason. Such guidance he got from God. Straight he rushed to the goal, because he was led by God.

Whenever he found himself in a strange place, he would feel that God had brought him there for some special purpose which was afterwards revealed to him. It was to give him some push in his Sadhana — contact of some people or some environment favourable to spiritual progress. Moreover he was an optimist. He took everything as willed by God for his good. When he was taken to places where cold was extremely severe and his skin was cracking due to exposure to cold, he thought *that* experience was necessary for his spiritual progress. It does not mean, however, that because it was necessary for Ramdas to pass through such experience everybody should undergo the same experience. You should not copy or imitate.

All through his Sadhana the belief that everything happens for good was there. So, surrender was practised from the very start. Otherwise the uncomfortable experiences he had would have given him much suffering, and he would have grumbled. He never found fault with anybody. He was always cheerful. For he knew that he was guided by God. He had no personal initiative or egoistic motive.

26th April, 1961.

Q : When Papa, in his Sadhana days, was undergoing fasting and such other forms of discipline as prompted by Ram, did he feel the pangs of hunger, thirst, etc.?

Ramdas: It is necessary to make it clear how Ramdas received orders from Ram. It was not any verbal order from Him. Every impulse that arose in him was coming from Ram. So, whenever there was an urge for fasting, he took it as divine command. On an impulse to sit down, he did so — that was taken as the command of Ram. Nobody from outside gave him instruction. When the impulse for fasting came he felt very happy. In the beginning of the fast Ramdas felt some hunger. But it did not cause suffering. While fasting, by the power of Ramnam, first the body became light and then the body-idea was lost. Fasting helped him that way. Although there was slight pinch of hunger in the beginning, later on there was no such feeling at all. Sometimes, during the course of his fast, Ramdas would be present at feasts and he never felt any craving for food. When food was offered to him, he had no inclination to take it.

When the impulse came to break the fast, he broke it. He did not know beforehand when he was to begin the fast or break it. At a particular moment the impulse would come and Ramdas would act upon it. There was no planning at all.

There was in him no Sankalpa or Vikalpa. Sankalpa is the process of planning for the future; Vikalpa is the feeling born of the pairs of opposites — pain and pleasure, like and dislike, etc. When ego is not there, the mind is

still. A pure or still mind is Atman. You cannot call it mind. The mind which was egoistic has disappeared. The eternal, all-pervading Atman alone is there.

It is better not to make any plans. If at all you make plans, make them subject to God's will. Otherwise, when you fail, the reaction on you will be bad. Suppose you make a promise that you would do such and such a thing and you are unable to keep it, you will feel depressed. It is not in our power to know what is to happen the next moment. Therefore whenever you have to give a word of promise, say, 'God willing, I will do it.' It is all in the hands of God. The so-called success and failure, good and evil, sin and virtue, everything should be dedicated to God. Then you are free. You make plans, because you are in the clutches of the ego.

Sri Siddharudha of Hubli was often in the habit of saying 'Gurunath's will.' While Ramdas was in his Ashram, he was watching the Swamiji. A pandit was daily reading Puranas to the assembled devotees there before Sri Siddharudha. One day, before he took his seat there, he had sent somebody to the town on some important business of the Ashram. In the middle of the reading, the man, who returned from the town, came and whispered in Swamiji's ears, 'Appa, what you told me could not be done.' Ramdas could hear this whisper. Swamiji simply remarked, 'Gurunath's will,' and kept quiet. With that remark, in an instant, he dismissed the matter.

It is common knowledge, your mind gets disturbed over trivialities. But matters of vital importance thoroughly upset your mind. You cannot brush them aside as Ram's will, because there is no spirit of surrender in you. Your

mind returns to it again and again. In real surrender, the mere thought, 'God's will,' will set your mind at rest. Some will remain quite undisturbed without even saying, 'God's will.' But if they express it, others can learn a lesson in calm resignation. Ramdas thinks Sri Siddharudha uttered those words, 'God's will,' with that idea.

There can be no elation or depression when the mind is in a state of surrender. That is the state of a Dwandwatita — changeless, static, eternal, serene and peaceful. That is your Being. When you know it, you are free. On the surface there may be some ripples, but there will be none in the depths. People who have not found the depths, lose their balance. In the case of a liberated soul, any disturbance that comes passes off quickly. For he is established in perfect equanimity by realization of the Self. He is called Aipta.

27th April, 1961.

Q : Is there any difference between a vacant mind and a still mind?

Ramdas: Vacant of what?

Q : Of thoughts.

Ramdas: Stillness means no thoughts. Vacant mind and still mind mean the same thing.

Q : Truth is revealed in a still mind.

Ramdas: What is Truth?

Q : One's own Self.

Ramdas: You remove the veil that covers the Atman. Suppose a diamond is covered with cow-dung.

When you remove the dung, the diamond reveals itself. Atman is covered with the mind which is nothing but a bundle of thoughts or desires. When desires are not there the mind ceases to be. Sadhana is done to attain mental purity, freedom from desires. Purification is essential for God-realization. In the fire of Jnana all desires are burnt to extinction. That is due to the grace of the Guru. He alone can give you spiritual perfection.

The Guru need not transmit his influence by talk, but his presence is enough. Some people remain in his company and open themselves to his influence. The influence he casts on them is sufficient to remove the veil and bring them face to face with their Self. Very often such receptivity is not in evidence as the heart is closed and the mind is filled with doubts. The influence ceases to be effective. Some simple, guileless souls get it very easily, like Narada who became a Deva Rishi because of the grace of the saints whom he was serving.

Some people are not able to get the full benefit of the influence. They get the awakening and take instructions from the Guru. They do Sadhana as instructed by him. That much of faith at least you must have. If not, Satsang cannot do you much good and you cannot be called a spiritual aspirant.

Q : What is the technique for opening the heart to the influence of the Guru?

Ramdas: Humility. You should feel you are nothing in his presence. The least pride in you prevents his influence from acting on you. Pride of learning, wealth and other things comes in the way. Humility is difficult to have. Therefore your spiritual progress is hampered. You have saddled yourself with many egoistic burdens.

You must go in the nakedness of your soul to meet the Lord. Then you will get His Darshan. Go as God made you, not as you have made yourself. God has made you a simple and egoless child. You stuff yourself with so much book-knowledge, pass examinations and earn degrees. The ignorance coupled with pride remains and you make yourself miserable. When you get rid of the ego, your life flows along like a rippling river, in all innocence and guilelessness. You have then a child-like nature.

1st May, 1961.

Q: 'To love everybody is to love none.' Papa will kindly let us know what this means.

Ramdas: All-ness relates to forms. When you love all forms you love none. 'You love him' means you love not his form, but him who is your Self. When you see your Self everywhere, you have none other to love.

Q: What does the term 'love' mean?

Ramdas: You see the Atman everywhere means you are everywhere. That is Self-realization. There is nobody else for you to love.

Q: Mataji looks upon everybody as herself. Does Papa say that is not love?

Ramdas: She does it spontaneously, not out of love. When my body is dirty I clean it. Just like that I wash another's body. Do you think you clean the body out of love? No. Do you take food out of love for the body? Is it not a natural action? No such thing as love is necessary there. You may ask Mataji again. She will say, 'I am feeding others just as I feed myself; I clothe their bodies just as I clothe my body.'

Q: Does Papa say there is no element of love in that?

Ramdas: Love requires two. There is no 'two' there. Ask her whether she loves a person as different from her. There is no love when there is nobody different from you. Ramdas has several times questioned her about his.

Q: Does she love Papa?

Ramdas: No. She says she is one with Papa and all beings.

Q: The definition of love is 'to treat another as oneself'.

Ramdas: When there is all-ness, there is no love. Loving everybody means loving none. Mataji says, 'I have got no love.' That means she does not have any thought of *another*.

Q: That is the highest form of love.

Ramdas: If there is love, there must be a lover. When you and I are one, where is the question of lover and the loved one? Why do you give food to another? The answer is, 'Because that *another* is myself. I feed him. That is all.'

Q: It is not love!

Ramdas: It is not. There must be *another* to love. There are no two entities at all here — only one. Love is the relationship between two persons. Love is on a lower level. You love and afterwards become one with the Beloved. Ask Mataji if she loves Papa. Ramdas has tried to catch her several times. She slipped away.

There is no person whom she loves. Everybody is herself. There is a poem Ramdas wrote years ago:—

In the infinite silence of the soul everything is naught;
 It is beyond the utmost depths of the mind;
 It is eternal rest, repose and peace;
 The loftiest, the sweetest love stands
 Aghast before that august presence;
 Even *it* has no entry in that mysterious realm.
 What then is mind? — What then is love?
 Mind is movement in darkness,
 Love is movement in light.
 But the great Truth is beyond both —
 It transcends thought, name, form, movement,
 Change, time, space, causation.
 One sole Reality — one sole existence.
 One supreme, colourless, attributeless, unthinkable
 Truth.

Q: A Self-realised person says: "I am seeing the Atman in another. I feel spiritually one with another. But I need not attend to his body as I am attending to my body."

Ramdas: He is only saying it. It is called 'bluffing.' Suppose his body has a boil which gives pain, will he not do something to relieve that pain? So also in another's case. All bodies are his bodies.

5th May, 1961.

Q: In meditation you fix your attention on mental images. What is the next stage?

Ramdas: You must continue meditation by thinking of the attributes of the Atman and by repeating

Ramnam mentally. If you do these things, the mind will gradually cease to wander. The wandering mind must be made quiet. That is the purpose of meditation. If you achieve stillness of mind, then you are successful in meditation.

Constant remembrance of God by repetition of His name is itself meditation. You are there separate from the Reality; you are meditating upon the Reality. Ultimately, when the mind is still, the veil between you and the Reality is removed and you know that you are the Reality.

Q : During meditation the image of the Ishta Devata must be in the mind. Is it not?

Ramdas: It will not be continuously there. Sometimes it may come and then go. After it goes, if the mind is still, it is all right. If it wanders, then you try again to concentrate upon the image. Sometimes you can and sometimes you cannot. But the sound of the Name is easier for concentration.

You must, in the first place, know that you are not the body, the senses and the mind; you are the Self or the Atman. You must distinguish between Atman and Anatman — Purusha and Prakriti. You are identifying yourself with the Prakriti. Instead of that you must identify yourself with the Atman through Vichara or discrimination. What is needed is complete elimination of the mind by stillness. Otherwise the mind will not allow you to realize the Self. The mind makes you identify yourself with the body. This thought arises in the mind because it is restless. Body-consciousness is too much with people who are prey to desires. Even if they are told that they are the Self and not the body, they do

not understand. They must believe in the words of the saints, 'The body is only a perishable thing. You are the Self.' Still the mind and realize you are the Atman. By hearing the words of the saints and thinking over the same constantly you can rend asunder the veil of ignorance that separates you from the Self.

Q: In chanting the Mantra, are we bound to have any mental phenomena?

Ramdas: Sound comes out of chanting. You make that sound the object of concentration. It is Shabda Brahman. You must have some object symbolizing God. Sound is the best. Sometimes the mind is a whirlpool. Even if you get some glimpses of the Divine, they are soon lost. The mind is very difficult to control. Therefore, dispassion and a steady practice of concentration are essential.

Some concentrate upon light, some upon the name of God. The latter is the easiest way. You cannot have always light. Sound you can have always anywhere. You can make your mind remember God at all times with the Upasana of sound. Upasana means 'sitting near' God. Chant the Mantra slowly, fix the mind on the sound, get absorbed in the sound, rise beyond it and feel the divine presence. You then get the experience of ecstasy, you forget the body and you know you are not the body. Now your mind, senses and body become still, and you realize the Self.

You must have faith. You must firmly believe that the sound of God's name will clear off all impurities of the mind. There is no need for any other Sadhana for you. Sound is Brahman. The Mantra gives out a sweet sound. Names of God comprise the Mantra.

Unless you have love for God you will not taste the sweetness of the Name. You must not have hankering for worldly things. The mind must not run after things outside in pursuit of happiness. Atman is Bliss. Atman is Truth. Unless you realize It, you can have no peace.

Before you enter on the path of Sadhana, you must know that you are seeking the Self. God is Self or Ananda. By realizing Him alone you can be really happy. So your aim is to realize Brahman or Atman in order to attain immortal, changeless, eternal happiness. When the world is forgotten and your mind is still, comes Atma-Jnana. The world which was looked upon during Sadhana as illusion is now seen as the expression of God you have realized within. This is the mystery; because the Truth is both manifest and unmanifest. You behold the world as Brahman after you have realized that you are the Self or Atman. Duality is absolutely wiped out. Even when you are active in the world, there is no sense of otherness.

Ramdas prescribes the method which he himself employed — Mantra Upasana. Generally there are four methods of concentration to make the mind disappear, i.e., to make all thoughts cease. The first is chanting the Name aloud. When the sound attracts the mind through the ears, the mind is absorbed. The second way is to bear in your bosom the form of your Guru and repeat the Mantra. By that the mind ceases to wander. The third method is to identify every object on which your mind dwells, with God. Verily, everything is God. The complaint is that the mind wanders. Let it wander; it rests only on God. Whatever you think is then God. The idea of God will rule your mind; God-thought alone will reign supreme in it. The fourth method is

to be the witness of the mind. You are the watcher and the mind is the watched. As you begin to watch the mind it will gradually cease to be. The witness or awareness alone is there. The thought-forms disappear from your mind when you stand apart from thoughts. Witness-consciousness is Atman. When you dissociate yourself from the mind in meditation, you will realize you are the Self. If you practise like this, thoughts will cease to rise and eventually the mind will be extinguished. You are then a radiant awareness or the self-luminous Atman. This experience yields you bliss and joy which permeates every part of your manifest being or every part of your life and body. Now you have no desires, ego or mind. You become the embodiment of bliss, purity and peace.

People think, 'If the ego goes, how can we work?' Then you are conscious that the divine Power is active in you and not the ego which has no existence. Jivan-Muktas are active. They have no desires. Work is done by them in a spontaneous way for the welfare of the world. It is their Swabhava. Really, your normal Swabhava is Divya Swabhava. When the ego-sense is there, life is full of strain, unhappiness and misery. Whereas, here there is no conflict. You are at peace in all circumstances. You love even the person who hates you. You adapt yourself to every condition and you feel one with everybody. That oneness is beyond Gunas. Dwandwas have no existence in that state. You feel you had all along been under a hallucination. Truth alone is real. Selfishness or illusion must go. When the illusion is dispelled, there is nothing but Brahman. All the world is Brahman. For one who has realized God, every body is God. When Swami Rama Tirtha was asked, 'Who are you?' he said, 'I am God, so are you.'

Q : What is the cause of a blank mind through meditation?

Ramdas: Blankness should not be there. There should be fullness of joy in the mind. Blankness is undesirable. How can it be blank?

Q : The mind is heavy.

Ramdas: It may be a Tamasic state. Mind is still obsessed by doubt. So there is no happiness. It is a state of torpor due to excess of Tamas. When the mind is still, there should be joy and peace. Real bliss can come only when you transcend even Sattwa. Torpor, dullness or heaviness you must avoid. In Sattwa Guna you are cheerful. When Rajas or Tamas over-powers you, the joy is gone. You must be careful. Excessive sleep makes you Tamasic. Not that you must give up sleep altogether. You must also have right company and moderate, Sattwic food. You should rise up to Sattwic nature and be free from Rajas and Tamas. Then you will have love, cheerfulness, equal vision, etc. But that state will not be also permanent. It is lost when you fall into Rajas or Tamas. Then you have to rush to solitude or seek company of saints in order to regain the lost Sattwa. The best thing is to be with a saint.

Association with Tamasic people makes you Tamasic, with Rajasic people makes you Rajasic, and with Sattwic people makes you Sattwic. Association with saints raises you above the Gunas. After walking in the hot sun, you feel tired and unhappy. When you come to the shade of a tree where cool breeze is blowing, you feel refreshed and happy. It is like that when you resort to the company of saints. Your mind becomes free from cares and worries and you feel happy. Satsang

is like the Malaya breeze that converts an ordinary tree into a sandalwood tree. So, when you are associating with saints your nature is transformed.

There is no way out of the impasse in which man is caught, except to go and touch the feet of the Guru. He at once makes you rise to his level of consciousness. He is not like the philosophers' stone. It does not convert iron into a philosophers' stone, but only turns it into gold. The saint makes you like himself. You must go with implicit faith and perfect surrender to him; then the transformation takes place at once. You must be open to receive.

Q : Is it wrong to tell a lie to save a thief?

Ramdas: Your telling a lie may help the thief for the moment; that is all. Later on he will have to suffer for his theft. The punishment is already determined for him. He must pay the penalty for his Karma.

Q : Not to save him from punishment but to win him over.

Ramdas: You have every right to tell him not to steal again. If he is in prison you can go there and tell him so. By telling a lie you cannot save him from punishment which he is bound to undergo sooner or later.

Q : Even when we think bad thoughts we get bad results.

Ramdas: Buddha says if you wish to have something belonging to another, you have committed theft. If another gets some big prize you feel jealous of him. Buddha says, 'Rejoice in the good fortune of others.' You should be pure in thought, word and deed. But

there is a belief that in Kali Yuga only bad actions will bear fruit, but not bad thoughts. That does not seem to be correct.

Q: But there is no question of sinning against humanity, etc., when everything is looked upon as Brahman.

Ramdas: When that is your state you can sit quiet. Only Brahman is there. Envy, jealousy, scepticism, anger, hate: these are all mental. When these thoughts come to our mind, they are degrading us no doubt. They prove obstacles on our path. Therefore, we are asked to be free from them. When the mind is impure, actions become automatically impure. You have to purify the mind first. Ultimately you will find desire itself is bad, and an obstacle. The final state is desirelessness. The so-called good desire also you must give up. Then you realize that everything is Brahman. For, when desires go, ego also goes. Ego which is fed by desires will disappear. 'I have no food here; I am going,' will be its swan song.

7th May, 1961.

Ramdas: This afternoon we were discursing as to what is left behind after a Jivan Mukta drops his body. Sai Baba's Samadhi is in Shirdi. Thousands go there to have his Darshan. From various parts of India they go to the place in a stream. What is it that draws them there? There must be some power present where his Samadhi is. Even when he is alive, a Jivan Mukta has no individuality. He has realized that he is the all-pervading Atman, and he is present everywhere. Why is it then that a particular place is considered sacred?

Is it due to the power, light and joy of the Atman that is still permeating the place where the body is buried or cremated? Yes. Each particle of the saint's body either in the form of dust or ashes has great divine power in it. And that power radiates light and joy to a responsive heart and elevates it by filling it with ecstasy and peace.

When we go to the Samadhi of a saint, we say we feel some peace-giving vibrations there, which are not found elsewhere. Is it due to a power revealed there out of the material remains of the Mahatma or is it due to the faith of the disciples? If anybody goes there without faith, he does not feel the vibrations. So both the power and the faith must be there before the soothing vibrations are felt.

In the temple, an image of God is installed. Some people, in the presence of the image, go into ecstasies and some do not. Is it due to the presence of the Divinity or is it due to the faith of the devotee? There is power in the image and faith in the devotee.

When you instal an image of God in a temple, there is what is called Prana Pratishtha by a devout soul or a saint who pours spiritual power into the image. So the devotee feels the divine Presence. Those who are devout respond to that Presence; others do not.

A Jivan Mukta's body is full of divine light, power and joy; and after he sheds it, his power remains in every particle of its ashes or dust. They give out spiritual radiance. That is why Samadhis are worshipped. A strange spiritual power is present there. Before it, whatever you pray for is granted. Many thousands go there for material benefit and get it. Shirdi was an unknown place. Now thousands are going there for

the Darshan of Sai Baba's Samadhi. It is the Bhakta's devotion that makes the power manifest in all its glory.

8th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Chanting God's name brings remembrance of God. Remembrance then develops into God-consciousness which leads to Self-realization. Even in that higher consciousness which is born of remembrance, there is a little duality. For example: A mother is busily engaged in the kitchen and her youngest child is in the cradle in another room. When the mother is working, she is conscious that the child is there. Remembrance has developed a consciousness so that if the child cries a little, she hears it in the midst of her activities. So also, Gopis had that consciousness of Sri Krishna even though they were away from him. True remembrance develops into a consciousness by which you feel His presence and that feeling of presence leads to union with your Beloved, which ultimately dissolves the sense of separation between you and Him. Then you realize the Brahman who is omnipresent.

Ramdas said yesterday that Gopis did not want Jnana. They wanted to love and adore Sri Krishna's form. Separation was agony to them. Uddhava was sent to tell them that Sri Krishna is dwelling everywhere—he is the supreme Brahman. They wanted him as a person in order to see him and to worship him. That was their ardent desire. When with him, they were happy; when away from him, they were unhappy. Sri Krishna took pity on them. Although they did not want Jnana, he gave Jnana to them. This was given without their asking — out of love and compassion for them. What happened then? They saw Sri Krishna

everywhere. Their own Self they saw everywhere. The hankering for a particular form disappeared. They could behold him everywhere as everything.

So, chanting Ramnam develops into Smaran or remembrance of God. We feel His presence with us when remembrance becomes intense. This consciousness of His presence develops into an awareness of the Self who is not separate from us. This is called Jnana. At the outset it is preparatory Bhakti. You concentrate on God in a form. You see the form, but it disappears. That means you are alternately happy and miserable. You aim at being always with Him. That is not possible. Form disappears when the mind is impure. You should therefore concentrate upon a form or name of God and through concentration rise beyond name and form by the realization of the Atman as the all-pervading reality, and then look upon the world as the expression of the Atman. Then you see nothing but Brahman or Sri Krishna everywhere. You live, move and have your being in Sri Krishna. Thus you begin by repeating 'Krishna, Krishna,' and finally realize that you are Sri Krishna.

Gopis passed through agony when Krishna went away to Mathura. They even accused him of having stolen their hearts leaving them in the wilderness. Read the Bhramara Gita in the Srimad Bhagavatam. The Gopis compared him to a Bhramara or black bee, which sucks the honey from the flowers and abandons them with their petals all in disorder. 'You have sapped the sweetness of our hearts and deserted us. You have stolen the love from our hearts. You are cruel like the Bhramara,' they said. If they had realized the Atman as Sri Krishna, then there would not have been all this

trouble. They did not take Uddhava's advice. They, therefore, suffered. Then, out of compassion Sri Krishna gave them Jnana.

Even when the Gopis went out to sell butter, instead of saying, 'butter, butter,' they would call out, "Do you want Krishna?" They could not think, see or talk except in terms of Sri Krishna. They were Krishnamaya. That state you can achieve by uttering the Name — Krishna or Ram. You should put your heart and soul into the chanting of the Name. Then your heart will blossom into that divine state in which you will behold God everywhere. Therefore, the Name is extolled and glorified. Those who have used the Name to receive the fullest benefit from it have achieved this grandest experience of knowing the Atman and seeing everything as the expression of the Atman. All this is achieved by the 'little' name *Ram*.

The Bhakta says, 'Oh, God, Your name is greater than You. When I have got Your name, why should I care for anything?' Name is God. Name is not different from Him. That means, Name is all powerful. Repeat it any way you like. Gradually, it will take hold of you. At first it may slip away, but at a certain stage it will possess you. Then you cannot forget the Name even if you try to. It will enter every pore of your being. The body itself will become divine as in the case of saints who are worshipped. It is no more the ordinary human body. Theirs is a holy body. Therefore it is said in the Narada Bhakti Sutras, 'The place which a saint treads is sanctified; the mother-earth feels happy because he is walking upon it. The dust on which he has set his foot is sacred.' It is also said that when such a saint walks in the street, Lord Vishnu Himself follows him closely

behind. Do you know why? He wants the dust that flies up from the tread of the saint's feet to fall on His body and purify Him.

You may repeat the Name in any way you like, but you must have love for the Name. You must have belief in the words of saints who say that the Name has infinite power to raise you from the human to the divine plane. But, generally persons use the power of the Name for getting things of the world. When you say, 'Ram,' 'Ram,' Ram must reveal himself within you. He is not in the sky, in Vaikuntha or in Kailas. He is waiting within us to be called, so that he may manifest himself in all his glory and power. But there is darkness within us. Darkness can go only by the grace of the saint. Go to the saint, get light and remove the darkness. Coupled with Satsang there must be the remembrance of God by taking His name — 'Satsang and Satnam.' Company of saints and God's name constitute Sadhana. This is easy. Everybody can sing the Name with love and devotion, and the mind will be inebriated with bliss.

So, God's name is said to be *sweet, sweet, sweet*. Once you taste the sweetness of the Name, you will not give it up. There is a piece of sugarcandy on the ground. A wandering ant comes and tastes it and, by its nature, wanders away from it and returns to it again. What makes it come back? Of course, the sweetness. So, once your mind has caught the sweetness of the Name, it will again and again take to it. It is not that you have merely to know about the Atman, but you have to experience the bliss of the Atman. You can bring out the sweetness of the Atman and enjoy it on the physical and mental planes. The body becomes a vehicle permeated by the Name which is bliss. Then seeing is bliss, hearing is

bliss, every movement of your body is bliss. Therefore devotees do not discard the world as an illusion but accept it as the dynamic aspect of the Divine. Just as water at a standstill is water, and water in waves is also water, so the Divine is both static and dynamic. One is bliss at rest and the other is bliss in movement. When you are free from the ego-sense you become blissful. Every particle of your body throbs to the music of eternal bliss.

Q : Will the saint see bliss also everywhere?

Ramdas: He sees bliss manifest as everybody and everything.

Q : Does he see no suffering?

Ramdas: A particular movement of bliss may be called suffering or misery. There exists only bliss. Otherwise, what do they mean by saying सर्व खल्विदं ब्रह्म—'Verily, everything is Brahman'?

10th May, 1961.

Ramdas: S. D. was here for some time. He would never allow any piece of paper or dry leaf to lie anywhere about the Ashram grounds. He would burn the sweepings in the oven of the bath room. That was his work till 10 a.m. Then he would go to the kitchen and cut vegetables. In the afternoon he used to sit with Ramdas and have some talk. In the evening also he would keep himself busy. There is a song which says, आराम हराम है 'Rest is bad.' Everybody must be up and doing. There should be no room for laziness.

Perhaps, this rule is not intended for people like Ramdas. He is now more for *aram* than work. It is no

easy thing to be quiet. The secret of power lies in silence of the mind and stillness of the body. It does not mean that you should be always like that. You should first conserve energy and then release it. You will be able that way to do tremendous work.

'Work, work, work' — that is the slogan of the day. For those who are Tamasic in nature, this motto is very good. Let them be Rajasic before they become Sattwic. They can then aspire to realize God. But to those who are above the two lower Gunas this advice does not hold good. *Aram* means laziness — a state of torpor. It is called *Alasya*, which is bad. You must work and also meditate. A few great souls are able to be quiet. They are beyond Gunas. They have tremendous power. Lazy people should be lashed into activity. Immersed in Tamas, the lazy man sleeps and eats, and eats and sleeps. Such a person will have to do some work or the other.

13th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Ramdas remembers his school days in Mangalore. He was a perfect failure as a student. He carried his books to school and brought them back home. That was all. He was not interested in his class lessons or in the study of the text books at home. In the High School he did not fare well. He appeared for the Matric but failed. In the V.J.T. Institute also he did not get pass marks, but his teachers were kind enough to give him a pass. When employed in the Mills as Spinning Master, he had no heart in the work, but the workers loved him.

He had very little of qualifications. In every walk of life he was a dismal failure. But, see what God has made of him. That shows, when God's grace comes, wonderful

things happen. Ramdas never dreamt that his life would take such a turn. He did not know what he was fit for. When he got Ramnam, he found it was his Swadharma—highest Dharma. Into it he put his heart and soul. On the ashes of his old life, his new life was founded.

14th May, 1961.

Ramdas: The question arises how you can concentrate your mind on God. You have to tell the mind, 'Go anywhere you like. Wherever you go, there is the Lord. You cannot get away from Him, because everywhere it is He.' The central idea that God is everywhere is thus fixed in the mind. Then the mind is easily concentrated on God-thought alone.

Q: Is the mind filled with Guru or is Guru all-pervading?

Ramdas: Whatever the mind thinks of is the form of the Guru. Guru idea will thus be predominant in the mind. That is one way of concentration. The mind will not dwell anywhere but in God. Whatever object you think of is God. Whatever idea comes to your mind is God. You identify every object with God. The object as object is not in your mind. So, let it wander; it does not matter. Everything is God. Then God-remembrance is always there in your mind. If it thinks of Bombay, Bombay is God. If it goes to Calcutta, Calcutta is God. Whatever you see is God, whatever you touch is God. Let it wander. What harm is there so long as this idea is established in your mind? That way you teach the mind to realize the presence of God everywhere. The mind is then always concentrated upon God.

Q: How to give up evil ideas?

Ramdas: By substituting good ideas. Lastly, you should rise beyond the ideas of good and evil. There is no good and no evil. What is good for you now is bad for you at some other time. There is no standard applicable in all cases. Good or evil, thinking makes it so. Truly, everything is divine.

Q : When you go beyond the mind, you can think like that.

Ramdas: Therefore, let the mind repeat Ramnam. You should go beyond the conception of duality. Purify the mind. Go beyond it. Then you will realize the Truth. 'Mind' means ignorance. Eliminate the mind by pure knowledge. That is done by repeating Ramnam. If you constantly repeat Ramnam, the dual conception will disappear and the mind will cease to exist; and the Atman will shine out.

A thick veil hides the light of the Atman. Remove the veil and you will realize the Atman. Desires will go. Ego-sense will be no more. There will be only pure bliss of the Atman. Love will flow out from your heart towards all beings and creatures in the world. You realize that you are the beginningless and endless Truth or Atman. You will see God everywhere; that means you will see your Self everywhere. The whole universe you will see as your own expression. *Your own* means you as Atman, not as individual soul or a bundle of sensations or desires. You are infinite, eternal, Satchidananda,. Realize this. The sense of duality is transcended and there is only pure bliss or joy — Ananda.

The disease of the soul is ignorance and Guru is the physician who cures it. 'Guru' means dispeller of darkness of ignorance; that is, he is the bringer of light of knowledge

into your heart so that you may realize that you are the Atman or Brahman.

Q : Is there any difference between ignorance and Maya?

Ramdas: They mean one and the same thing. You are labouring under the illusion that you are the body, that you are an individual consisting of body, senses, mind, etc. Just as you mistake the rope for a snake, you mistake the body as yourself. When that illusion goes, you know that you are Brahman. Illusion has created the veil of ignorance. You have not to attain anything new, but you have to realize that you are Brahman. You are already that, but you think you are the body.

Q : What is meant by Viveka?

Ramdas: By Viveka or discrimination you distinguish the real from the unreal. You have to identify yourself with the real and discard the unreal. Previously you were identifying yourself with the unreal. You have now to identify yourself with the real; then ignorance will go. You get the knowledge of the Atman through Viveka. Whatever is seen is unreal. Whatever is unseen—beyond name and form—is real. By becoming aware of the real you reject the unreal and you know that you are the real.

Ramdas witnessed a drama that was enacted in Hubli. It was this: In the kingdom of the body there lived a king called mind. He became friendly with six persons—Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada and Matsarya. He had a minister called Viveka. Through the evil influence of his friends the king suffered much, but finally repented and listened to the advice of his minister, Viveka, and attained peace. When you make

friends with Viveka, all evil tendencies in your mind vanish.

Viveka or discrimination is awakened in the company of saints. Before that, man is no better than an animal. He lives a life of sense-pleasures.

Q : Even in the company of saints some people do not improve.

Ramdas: If they come with the aspiration to improve, they will be benefited. So many Sadhus come here. They want money, cloth, food and other things. Apparently, they are seekers. They are not seekers of God but seekers of worldly things. One in a million goes to a saint with the object of realizing the Truth.

Once a question was put to Ramdas: 'You were awakened by Ramana Maharshi. But he is not alive now. Can you not give me what you got from him?' Ramdas told him, 'You must come to Ramdas in the same way as Ramdas went to him. In the same spirit if you come to Ramdas, you will also get what Ramdas got.' The questioner kept quiet! It depends upon with what aspiration you go to meet a saint.

Q : But by the saint's company he can gradually improve.

Ramdas: He will gradually have the necessary aspiration and become a Nishkama devotee. Until then then he will be after material things. In course of time, when he develops real aspiration, the presence of the saint will destroy the darkness in his heart. He need not ask for it. Previously the windows of his heart were shut, as it were. How could he receive the saint's influence? The ego must not stand in our way. Outwardly we may

be humble, but inwardly we are not. That is the great obstruction.

Keep the windows of your heart open. Be humble and receptive. In all humility approach the saint, thinking nothing of yourself. Empty yourself that you may be filled.

15th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Whatever is spoken about the ultimate destiny of the soul is imperfect. Whatever is expressed about it, even after experiencing that supreme state, is imperfect. So you like more and more to keep silent with regard to spiritual matters. Sri Krishna in the Gita says that there are four kinds of Bhaktas: Arta, Artharthi, Jijnasu and Jnani. He declares that a Jnani-Bhakta is himself. 'To honour him is to honour Me, to worship him is to worship Me,' says he. A Jnani-Bhakta is one who has realized everything as Brahman. He knows that both the manifest and the unmanifest are Brahman. But these are words which convey no meaning to us. The experience is far grander, richer and more perfect than what words can convey. Words are powerless to express that highest experience. In the twelfth chapter of the Gita, the qualities of a Jnani-Bhakta are given. In Sri Krishna, Bhagavan and Bhakta are rolled into one. Therefore Sri Krishna says, 'The Jnani-Bhakta is myself.' When you love anybody, you love yourself. When you see anybody, you see yourself. When you talk to anybody, you talk to yourself. Bhakta and Bhagavan are one. Then, why do you talk? It is just for Lila or play.

Q : But what about talking of God, about realization of God?

Ramdas: "All this talk is useless." It does not convey any sense. When you compare it with experience, it is like holding a lighted candle before the sun.

Q : That talk will be helpful to devotees.

Ramdas: Ramdas does not know how it can help you. You will be getting into a worse maze.

Q : When it comes out from the mouth of a realized person, definitely it will help us.

Ramdas: His voice may help you. That is the benefit; the saint's mere presence, and some power of his words; not the meaning. Although he tries, he cannot convey through words what he experiences.

Q : If Papa abuses us we like that. If others abuse us, we do not like it.

Ramdas: So, whatever nonsense a saint speaks will have its effect on the people who hear him — is that what it means? In his own view, it is all nonsense. He finds, whatever he says about his experience is not correct, is not the thing. It is simply indescribable. When you try to express the inexpressible, your power of expression fails. Ramdas was wondering why Swami Vivekananda said just before he passed away, when some disciples went to him and asked for his last message, 'Throw into the sea whatever I have said and written in books.' He felt what all he had said did not convey what he actually experienced. Still, we try to think about it, we try to express it through words. Can it be right?

Q : A description of Sadhanas done to reach the goal will be useful.

Ramdas: That is all right. What about the goal?

Q: That we can get from Papa's face.

Ramdas: If the face satisfies you, Ramdas can sit silent before you. But somehow you wish that he should talk. Is it not so?

Q: That is the Lila. Experiences during Papa's Sadhana days will help us.

Ramdas: Think of God for twentyfour hours every day. Then you will have Him. Who is going to do it? You have so many other things in the world to claim your attention.

Q: That is the thing we want to know—how to repeat the Name all the twentyfour hours.

Ramdas: You must do as Ramdas did. People accused him of neglecting the so-called duties in the world. He set himself to think only of God all the twentyfour hours. He was considered mad. Unless you do it for twentyfour hours you cannot get Him. But you have to sleep, you have to attend to other work, etc. Who is going to do Sadhana in this manner?

Upasana and Niskama Seva must be there to purify the mind. For listening to the advice of the Guru you should have concentration. If your mind wanders here and there, the words of the Guru will fall flat on you. A concentrated mind is a purified mind. When the mind is pure, you become the Adhikari. You can sit with a focussed mind and absorb the Guru's teachings. Then Manana and Nididhyasana will follow, and the Atman will reveal Itself. You cannot know what It is, but you can realize It.

Unless your mind is pure, you are not fit for Sravana (listening). For removing all desires and then acquiring fixity of mind, right action or Karma is a means.

Q : What is the meaning of Nididhyasana?

Ramdas: Fixing the mind on the goal is Nididhyasana. The object is to destroy ignorance. You have to do Sadhana for that. You are the Self, but you do not know it. Ignorance has cast a veil on it.

Sadhana consists of repeating God's name. Side by side with the repetition of the Name, you will be doing some work also. That will be done in a Nishkama spirit, if your goal is Self-realization. You have to concentrate on the sound of the Name. That is Upasana, which will purify your mind. Then you are entitled to get Jnana through Sravana, Manana and Nididhyasana. God arranges for it in such a way that you get into contact with a saint; your heart becomes saturated with his words. Then you feel that the saint's words have awakened you. His words are imbued with power. You go to him with an open, receptive mind, free from distractions or impurities. Then you get the highest benefit. You realize the Atman as soon as ignorance is dispelled. All Sadhana is meant to remove ignorance. You are already Atman. There is no question of attainment. You become only aware of it.

Q : When one gets opportunities for Satsang, it is a sign of God's grace.

Ramdas: Yes. It is because of divine grace you are able to meet a saint.

During his Sadhana days Ramdas often wondered at the way God arranged for his going to many holy

places. When he reached a place where he had to rest for the night, he would find that a Bhajan was going on there. He would be sitting at the Bhajan fully absorbed. It was as if God had arranged a special Bhajan for him. If he went to temples, he would be going there just at the time of worship. When he went to saints, he had not to wait for their Darshan. Besides, he was always in the company of Sadhus who loved and served him just like a mother. When you are in His hands you see how wonderfully He arranges things for you. In your spiritual progress God helps you in every way. That is why 'In Quest of God,' the first book he wrote, contains this Sloka as its motto:

अनन्याश्चिन्तयन्तो मां ये जनाः पर्युपासते ।

तेषां नित्याभियुक्तानां योगक्षेमं वहाम्यहम् ॥

'To those who always remain absorbed in My meditation, to those ever harmonious, I bring full peace and security.'

Without Ramdas' plan he was taken to right places and right persons and into fit solitudes. Ramdas knew nothing beforehand about it all, and he did not want to know. But he slipped into every change that took place, without any resistance. He was perfectly happy in all conditions. So grace is there always pouring on us. We must be conscious of it. When we go to saints we will find their grace pouring on us like gentle rain. You must submit and allow God to do what He pleases with you. Reconcile yourself to the situation in which He places you. Do not try to change it. Do not get disturbed under any circumstances.

Q : What little we do, we must think that God is making us do it.

Ramdas: When you do good things you think *you* have done them. Bad things you attribute to God. That should not be the case.

Q: I mean only the Sadhana done.

Ramdas: You must think He makes you do it.

Q: Without our efforts how can there be Sadhana?

Ramdas: What efforts can you make? You plan to go to a place on a certain day, and you find you cannot go that day. You can make efforts to know that *your* efforts are of no avail. If anything is achieved, it is through God's will. If it be by your effort, why should you fail at times?

Q: How does repetition of Ramnam lead to concentration?

Ramdas: Simply muttering like a parrot will not do. The mind should get absorbed in Ramnam. That is concentration. If the mind does not run about here and there, you will experience the sweetness of Ramnam.

Q: I thought that forgetting the body and the world is concentration.

Ramdas: Concentration is the preparation to attain that state — to get the mind still. In that state you forget the body and attain divine consciousness. Ramnam enables you to achieve it. That is Ramdas' experience. He was simply chanting Ramnam; meditation was not there. Ultimately the mind ceased to wander and chanting stopped. He sat down and meditation came of its own accord and he was lost in it. He sat like this for three hours. He was awake and still he was oblivious of the world. It was all due to Ramam and contact of saints.

Attune your mind with Ramnam. Otherwise you cannot bring it under control.

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।

अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

‘Without doubt, O mighty-armed, the mind is restless and difficult to control; but through practice and renunciation, O son of Kunti, it may be governed.’

If you want to be really happy, identify yourself with the Atman and dissociate yourself from the world. How to do it? The mind does not agree to detach itself from the world. Even when you sit silent by yourself, see how much opposition it offers. It is easy to say, ‘Be the witness of your mind and body.’ It requires long and continuous practice. And Ramnam makes it possible. If mind is made to repeat Ramnam, it gradually yields.

You have to detach yourself from the mind in meditation. You are not the mind. You are the witness of it. Sit in that attitude. If you repeat Ramnam, you will find that the mind does not hinder you from attaining detachment. On the other hand it will help you. Ramdas chanted Ramnam continuously for two years, and when he sat down for meditation he found the mind was not there. Pure consciousness alone was there. He at once sank into a state of perfect bliss and ecstasy. The mind had disappeared in the course of repetition of Ramnam daily for all the twentyfour hours. His Vairagya was intense. There was no attachment, no desire, no aspiration for anything in the world. The mind was fixed on Ramnam, and Ramnam completely rooted out the mind. Not Ramdas alone but many others have attained inner liberation through Ramnam.

If you repeat Ramnam without any desire for worldly things, then at the very start you will find it sweet like nectar. It catches you. You cannot give it up. Unless you have tasted its sweetness, it is impossible to repeat it for twentyfour hours. It is both the means and the end. Many people say, 'We find the Name dry and insipid.' How can they then repeat it for twentyfour hours? Well, how did Ramdas repeat it for such a long time continuously. It was because he found it very sweet. Ramnam must be felt sweet by you. Then you do not give it up. Truly, as a saint says, when the Name is continuously on your tongue, you are a Jivan Mukta.

18th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Don't you have the feeling that you are father or mother, rich or poor, healthy or unhealthy, brother or sister, employed or unemployed in relation to your respective positions in life?

When you realize that you are the Self, then these feelings cannot be there. These are associated with the ego-consciousness. In the absence of this consciousness you have the awareness of the Self. In fact, the consciousness that you are all these, constitutes the ego. In its absence the ego has no place. Now you cannot say, 'I am his father. She is my mother. I am related to this person or that person.' Relationship is because of the ego or Jiva-Bhava. Therefore what you should do is to attribute all these to God:

त्वमेव माता च पिता त्वमेव त्वमेव बन्धुश्च सखा त्वमेव ।

त्वमेव विद्या द्रविणं त्वमेव त्वमेव सर्वं मम देवदेव ॥

'You alone are my mother, father, relation friend, knowledge and wealth --- you are everything to me, Oh! God of gods.'

Thus you become free from such relationship. Ultimately you transcend name and form and realize the Self. You then find that you have all along been only saying under the influence of the ego that you are father, brother, rich man, etc.

When you become one with God, then there is no question of any relationship with anybody. As a result of it the sense of relationship vanishes. It merges in the knowledge of the Self. It may be there like a shadow, but the false reality about it, the clinging, the worry caused by it will not exist. There is no posing in a saint even as a saint.

Q : If he is a saint or a realized soul, there cannot be any ego in him.

Ramdas: They cannot go together. He who poses as a saint is a hypocrite. When we are posing in so many ways — as father, mother, brother, etc., we are not aware of the Self.

Q : When we are in the ego-consciousness, all these are natural to us. But posing as a saint can be done only deliberately.

Ramdas: From the standpoint of the Atman all these relationships are false. There is no reality about them. So one who is not a saint can pose as a saint. There is no meaning in a saint posing as a saint.

Q : In his ignorance a father believes that he is a father. He does not know or believe that he is posing like that. He is not a hypocrite. One who poses as a saint does not believe that he is a saint. He is a hypocrite.

Ramdas: From the light of the Atman the father is a pretender.

Q : We call that ignorance and the other pretension.

Ramdas: Pretension is another name for ignorance. Is it not? Whatever way an ignorant man behaves in the world, he is posing only.

A Bhakta says, 'God is my father. God is my mother.' He does not recognize any relationship with any being in the world.

Q : Till the father becomes a devotee, his son, daughter, everybody is real to him.

Ramdas: If you think that God is real, the world is unreal for you. You cannot have two realities. Either the world is real or God is real.

Suppose a Self-realized soul had a son before realization. The son comes before him. If he is asked, 'Are you his father?' What would he say? That son may say, 'He is my father,' but, will the father say, 'He is my son?'

Q : Naturally he will not say, 'He is my son.'

Ramdas: Once it happened like this. A letter came from Madurai for Swami M. who was known before as S. R. 'Whose letter is it?' asked Ramdas. 'It is the letter of S.R.'s mother,' he said. He has now no mother! Is that the correct position? Whatever that be, after you attain Jnana, you cannot have any relationship with anybody. Relationships are superimpositions or Upadhis. Relationship has no reality.

Q : Sri Sankara said he had the duty to perform his mother's obsequies.

Ramdas: He had given the promise that he would perform the rites. Even if he had given such a word to somebody else, he would have done it.

Q: At the last moment Sri Ramana Maharishi touched his mother's body and gave her liberation.

Ramdas: He gave liberation to the cow Lakshmi too. He would have done the same to anybody who had faith in him — whether it be father, mother, stranger or anybody. The criterion is faith.

Q: Is there any relationship in that?

Ramdas: His mission in life was to liberate those who surrendered to him or loved him. He did not make any distinction.

Q: When he sees Brahman everywhere, who is there to be liberated?

Ramdas: Then, why should you go to saints? When you go with aspiration, the saint automatically reacts. For the good of the world he is there. Although it looks as if one is a Guru and the other a disciple, there is no such inward relationship. Everything is done spontaneously. He never does it deliberately. It is a response to the need of the person who comes — expressed or unexpressed. The Guru does not consider himself to be such. People take him to be a Guru and consider themselves as disciples.

To bring out the greatness of the Guru, there is a story:

Kakabusundi is a character introduced in Tulsidas Ramayana. He was a Brahmin and considered himself the disciple of a Guru. He learnt the scriptures and became proud. He used to give a lot of trouble to his Guru, even treat him with contempt. One day he went to Shiva's temple and sat in meditation inside it. The Guru happened to go to the temple for Shiva's Darshan.

The disciple opened his eyes and saw his Guru, but did not get up. This attitude, the Guru did not mind, but Shiva cursed him: 'You will become a serpent for ever.' The Guru heard this curse and said to Shiva, 'What have you done for such a trifling mistake? In fact, it is not a mistake at all. He is my child and you have cursed him. You should withdraw the curse.' Shiva replied, 'I cannot do that. I will reduce the punishment to ten thousand years.' Kakabusundi spent that period as a serpent and was again born as a Brahmin. He then went to a Yogi and had a discussion with him about Jnana. He maintained that devotion is the only way for liberation and in the course of the discussion insulted the Yogi. The Yogi cursed him and said, 'May you become a crow.' He thus became a crow and was flying about. He met sage Narada and told him, 'I blundered twice. First I ill-treated my Guru and secondly I insulted a Yogi. How can I get relief?' 'Take Ramnanam,' said Narada. He took Ramnam with all earnestness. Sri Rama was pleased and gave him Darshan. Sri Rama said, 'Ask any boon you want.' Kakabusundi replied, 'I want only one-pointed devotion to Thy holy feet.' Sri Rama said, 'If you want a human body I will give you that also.' He replied, 'I do not want a human body, because it is in this crow-body I have developed devotion for Thee'. Kakabusundi is said to live eternally as a crow, with one-pointed devotion to the lotus feet of Sri Rama.

Such is the story of Kakabusundi. Though he gave so much trouble to his Guru, still the latter was so merciful and kind. Shiva cursed him as also the Yogi. The moral is that Guru will never see evil in his devotees, especially in those who look upon him as father and mother.

There is a Sloka in the Gita which explains why God is extremely kind towards those who are close to Him. Sri Krishna says; 'I am the same to everybody, but my Bhaktas are dear to me.' Same is true of saints also. Friend or foe is equally welcome to them. It can be interpreted this way, 'Those who go near saints get the most benefit; but those who are far a way do not get it.' In that sense Sri Krishna must have said, 'I am the same to everybody.' God serves His Bhaktas. He is a servant of servants. He loves those who are near to Him. But others also, when they approach Him, get the same benefit. So He is the same to friend and foe. Whether they praise Him or blame Him, when they approach Him, they are benefited by His grace, just as the lamp gives light to those who praise it or blame it when they go near it. So, saints are good to all alike, friend or foe, relation or non-relation, countryman or foreigner. Their love is impersonal in character, based upon the knowledge of the Atman which pervades everywhere.

19th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Yesterday we were talking about posing as father, mother, brother, etc. Ramdas also said that after you attain Jnana you cannot have any relationship with anybody. You cannot say, 'I am his father. She is my mother,' and so on. We referred today to Arthur Osborne's 'Ramana Maharshi and the path of Self-Knowledge.' There we find that Sri Ramana said in a prayer to Arunachala: 'Oh, Lord! Cure my mother's fever. Enfold my mother in Thy light.' Therefore, there is nothing wrong in a Jnani referring to persons as he used to do before Self-realization. Inner detachment is the thing needed.

In a book entitled 'Bhakti Yoga', an instance is given of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar. He was a member of a committee entrusted with some public work. A meeting of the committee was arranged to take place in his house on a particular date. Meanwhile his son, who had obtained a foreign degree in Medicine or Surgery, suddenly took ill and died on the day of the meeting. What would a man in Vidyasagar's condition do? He would cancel the meeting. But Vidyasagar did not do so. The other members of the committee did not know about this death. They came as usual and assembled in an outer room for the meeting. He also went there and was conducting the meeting as if nothing had happened. In the course of the meeting a record had to be referred to. One of the members said, 'I will get the record from the inner room.' Then Vidyasagar said, 'Take care. My son is lying there dead. Do not be upset.' He was so cool and collected. All were surprised. After the meeting dispersed, the cremation was arranged. Such was his inward detachment.

When Keshab Chandra Sen was seriously ill, Sri Ramakrishna went and saw him. Then the members of his family were round about Keshab Chandra Sen. Sri Ramakrishna said, 'Why are all of you here? His attachment to you will turn his mind towards you. You had better get away. Let him think of God.'

Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar was invited to a feast. The condition was that the invitees should come dressed in western costume — coat, pants, shoes etc. Vidyasagar went in his simple Indian dress. He was not admitted by the man at the gate. He went home, put on his pants, coat, shoes, etc., and then joined the others at the feast. When food was served, he put some of the food on his

pants, some on his shoes and some on his coat. People in wonder asked him, 'What is this?' He replied, 'This food is for my dress. Let it enjoy it. It is not for me.'

There is another story about Vidyasagar. He was to deliver a lecture at a certain place. He was going to that place by train. He was in very plain dress. He got down at the particular station. A fashionable gentleman who was to attend the same meeting also got down at that station and had a trunk with him. He mistook Vidyasagar for a porter and asked him to carry the trunk for him. At once he quietly carried the trunk to a hotel nearby. When offered the hire, he said, 'I do not take anything for service done.' In the evening when Vidyasagar ascended the platform to deliver his lecture, the fashionable gentleman was also there. He afterwards begged pardon of Vidyasagar for what he had done to him. 'There is nothing wrong,' said Vidyasagar. That is the way of the truly great.

20th May, 1961.

Ramdas: Some say that absence of sorrow is happiness. But the absence of sorrow is due to the presence of happiness. What is real happiness? It is the removal of the cause of all sorrows — not merely the removal of the present sorrow. Some people, when they suffer pain, are unhappy. They remove the pain by some treatment and get joy. But that does not give permanent joy. That was the problem for Buddha. He wanted to remove misery by finding out the source of it. Then he found that Trishna or desire is the root cause of all misery. And he set himself to remove the cause of Trishna, which is ignorance. According to the path shown by him, he asks us to get rid of ignorance. Removal of ignorance

alone can bring happiness. Man runs after superficial things of life and gets happiness which is only short-lived. Eternal happiness lies in the source of our being which is Self or Reality.

What a peculiar being has God made Ramdas! There are all kinds of antitheses in him. They seem to be there but still not there. Their very existence makes him feel that they do not exist. Ramdas cannot tell you what God has made him.

‘Whom has God *made*?’ is the question that now arises. Is not every being a unique creature? Is not each individual a rare expression or embodiment of God? Still there is a wonderful diversity, and each person or being is unique in himself or herself. Still He is everything and you see opposites also there. In nature you find no dull uniformity. No two things or persons are alike. Divergent natures exist in the one supreme Being; they are reconciled in Him.

Ramdas referred to himself because he knows himself better than the others can. Is there ‘another’ for him? It is better to keep silent.

In the Gita there is this Sloka — (II-29)

आश्चर्यवत्पश्यति कश्चिदेनमाश्चर्यवद्ब्रूदति तथैव चान्यः ।

आश्चर्यवच्चैनमन्यः शृणोति श्रुत्वाप्येनं वेद न चैश्चित् ॥

‘One sees the Self as a wonder, and so also another speaks of Him as a wonder; and as a wonder another hears of Him; and though hearing, none understands Him at all.’

That wonder makes you tongue-tied and your mind is still. You cannot express anything.

Ramdas will read out to you a few salient extracts from an article entitled 'Yoga Vasishta' in the 'Vedanta Kesari'.

'Yoga Vasishta' is an inspired exposition of the fundamentals of God-realization. It is a record of the dialogue between Sri Rama and his Guru, Vasishta.

'We make our fate and we are responsible for our destiny, for these are nothing more than what inevitably happens in the light of our own previous actions — good or bad. Hence it is possible for us to change our destiny by our own unrelenting efforts. Hence fatalism need not act as any binding force and make us lapse into passivity which curbs individual effort on our part. We can change our destiny for the better.' This is the inspiring message of Vashishta to Sri Rama.

'He alone knows the absolute Reality who knows it by direct intuition, merging himself in it; others only repeat the words of the scripture,' says Vasishta. The absolute Reality is of the nature of Pure Consciousness. But how do we explain the obvious facts of multiplicity and plurality in the world? These do not really exist in Brahman which is homogeneous and the world is nothing but a mere appearance. It is both real and unreal like the river of a mirage observed in the light of the sun. It appears as the snake appears in the rope.

'What are the means recommended by Vasishta for liberation from bondage of birth and death? The most essential and the only course is the acquisition of knowledge of the Self. Liberation cannot be conferred on anybody as a kind of boon, unless the individual deserves it by his own right. The God that is worshipped is the God that is within all of us. He is to be constantly thought

about all the time of our life, and in contrast to this form of worship, no worship of any external God is necessary.

‘External renunciation of things and duties is of no use at all, for it is the internal craving for them that has to be abandoned. The busy life of the world need not bind any man if he has renounced the desires and cravings for things.

‘The aspirant should deeply and constantly meditate on the one Reality; and on his being one with the absolute Brahman. The mind must be annihilated through realizing its unreality. The negation of the mind is the realization of the eternal Brahman. Imagination is the bondage of the mind and its absence is liberation. We must renounce all our desires. We must eradicate the egoistic feeling, the feeling of individuality. All these steps lead us on finally to Mukti.

‘The verses in the Bhagavad Gita regarding the Sthita-Prajna find an echo in Vasishta’s description of the liberated individual. As long as the physical body lasts he is a Jivan-Mukta and after the shedding of the body, he becomes a Videha-Mukta. The drop of sea water is now the sea itself.’

23rd May, 1961.

Ramdas: To be happy in oneself, objectlessly, is Atmananda. Usually our happiness depends upon outside objects. If we get anything we are happy. If we do not get the thing we want, then we are unhappy. So our happiness is based upon something outside us. But true happiness depends upon our Self. Therefore Atmananda is called objectless happiness.

You are happy because you cannot but be happy. If you are happy because of objects outside, it will be impermanent, as objects are not permanent. Eternal happiness is revealed within you when you know that you are the Atman. Atman is bliss. Bliss reveals itself objectlessly in you, when the veil of ignorance is lifted, which has made you think that you are the body and not the Atman, and that your happiness lies outside you, whereas it is your real nature. You are Atman yourself. Atman is pure joy, delight, ecstasy.

Ramdas had seen a Sadhu who went by the name, Atmananda, and that name eminently fitted him. He met him in Junagad in a mango garden. Every two or three minutes he would break out into laughter without any apparent cause. He would be bubbling with laughter. He was full of joy — laughing and laughing. Suddenly he would stop, and again break out into laughter. He could not control it even if he wanted to. It was bursting out of him. That is Atmananda.

Ramdas has seen some Sadhus who are always smiling or laughing. That is not a smile of happiness at getting something longed for. The laughter of those Sadhus is different. The fountain of joy is opened within. The joy has revealed or manifested itself on the removal of the veil of ignorance. Then there is no end to the joy. One has to be happy; one cannot help it. What a wonderful state it is! All are aiming at such a state — perennial happiness based upon his or her own Self. Therefore God is called Self-existent Truth—Swayambhu: not created. He is eternal and infinite. That which is created has a beginning and an end. He is there always. He is also Swayamprakasha, self-luminous. Joy and

Atman are not different. Atman or God is pure bliss — Satchidananda.

To remove ignorance, the easiest way is to chant Ramnam. Whose name? The name of Atmaram. You are remembering Atmaram by uttering the Name. The veil of ignorance between you and Him will go and He will manifest Himself in all His glory and sublimity. You will realize that you are the Atman, Brahman or God. By repeating the name of the Atman you become conscious of the Atman. Before that you were conscious of the body and you were thinking all along that you were the body. This consciousness you must give up and the Brahmic or divine consciousness you must attain.

For that the Name is very helpful. It takes you beyond the mind and the senses and gives you ecstasy. You feel one with the Atman or Bliss. Earlier you enter a state of super-consciousness, which is peace and joy. Thereafter you struggle to have that joy always. When you come down to a lower plane, you get disturbed. You want to transcend the Gunas and become permanently settled in that joy or bliss. The Name will lead you to that state positively, provided you take it with the sole object of attaining that beatific state. If you have divided aims, you cannot get that supreme happiness. Generally you go the wrong way in seeking happiness and you get transitory happiness, and that happiness is pursued in the belief that some day it will become permanent; but it will not, because transitory things cannot give you permanent happiness.

What can give enduring happiness is Brahman whose very nature is bliss and peace. When you know that you are That, then you experience a happiness which abides with you always; because its nature is

eternal. When you experience bliss of the Atman by repeating the Name, you declare that Name itself is Atman, because the bliss you get by uttering the Name is born of the Atman. By losing the mind in the Atman, you get it.

The Name is sweeter than nectar. It will take you to the highest spiritual consciousness, to a state in which subject and object become one; seeker and sought become one; devotee and God become one; disciple and Guru become one. Thereafter Sadhana ceases, because there is no Sadhaka there, no Bhakta, no seeker as such. You realize that you are Brahman, you are yourself the Guru. Then it is that you see yourself everywhere, as everything in the world-manifestation, as universal body of God. In the common parlance, you say, you see God everywhere. Who is to see God everywhere? How can you see Him standing apart from Him? As He is one with you, you see yourself everywhere. It is in that vision and experience your ego-sense is completely wiped out and all desires clinging to that non-existent ego also disappear. You become desireless. You enjoy supreme happiness.

To become desireless is not easy. In the fire of intense desire for God all desires of the world are burnt out and when you realize God, when you know you are He, the desire for God also drops off. Then, you are perfectly desireless. You have no ambition, no aspiration for anything of this world or of the other world. Nothing to gain or lose. You have found immortal bliss, power and wisdom. Where is the question of your being imperfect? You are Poorna — perfection itself.

To attain the highest spiritual perfection, mind must become absolutely pure. Ramnam purifies the mind,

and then the latter ceases to be. Now you realize that you are the Atman. Mind is something like a veil covering the Atman. You ordinarily live in the consciousness of the body thinking that you are the body. You are caught in the meshes of diversity and duality. If anything happens to the body, you think it has happened to you, because of your ignorance. Truly, you are deathless and birthless. If you are conscious of this, death will have no terrors for you. The body drops away; but you live for ever as the beginningless and endless Truth. If you are aware of this, you will always be blissful. So, sages and saints din into your ears, 'Know yourself as Atman or the Truth. Do Sadhana to remove the veil of ignorance. The senses, mind, intellect: all these, you know, perish with the body. You are none of these. You are the immortal, changeless Spirit.'

नैनं छिन्दन्ति शस्त्राणि नैनं दहति पावकः ।

न चैनं क्लेदयन्त्यापो न शोषयति मारुतः ॥

अच्छेद्योऽयमदाश्चोऽयमक्वेद्योऽशोष्य एव च ।

नित्यः सर्वगतः स्थाणुरचलोऽयं सनातनः ॥

'Him weapons cut not, fire burns not, water wets not, and wind dries not. He cannot be cut, nor burnt, nor wetted, nor dried up. He is everlasting, all-pervading, stable, firm and eternal.' (II-23-24)

A Muslim king found a Sufi saint repeating 'Analhuq' — 'I am God.' He told him, 'If you say that again in my presence, I will cut off your head.' 'I cannot be killed. I am the immortal Spirit. You can cut this body, not me,' said the saint. This daring reply made the king drop his sword. Swami Rama Tirtha addressed death, 'Take away this body. I live everywhere; in the

moon, the sun, the air, the sky, etc. I am indestructible. I am immortal.'

So we come to the conclusion that we are the Atman and not the body. Do not forget this any time. Ramnam will enable you to reach this consciousness, because you are taking the name of the Atman. By repeatedly taking the name of the Atman you will attain the consciousness that you are the Atman. It is a simple process. God is not far away anywhere in temples or in the heavens. You are He. It is the central idea you should have before you start the Sadhana. You will find that you and He are not different. He is the breath of your breath, soul of your soul, life of your life; He is yourself. 'I went in search of Him and found I am He.'

There is a song of Swami Brahmananda which says: 'I have forgotten myself and come to trouble. I consider myself to be the body. That is the reason for my unhappiness.' The secret that you are the Atman, you can know only from the Guru. Neither Gods nor books can let you into that secret. What is the path? Constant thinking of God by repeating Ramnam. Repeating Ramnam means remembering God. You must know you are chanting the Name of your own Self. Then realization of the Self becomes easy. If you take God to be outside you, progress becomes very slow. Believe at first He is within you. Experience will follow. If you accept that there is a place called Kashi, there is a chance of your reaching it. You will get the necessary guidance about the route. By following it you will reach Kashi. In the same way, you must believe the words of saints when they say, 'God is within you and His name will lead you to Him and make you realize Him.' Then you set about finding Him as directed by the Guru.

When you repeat the Name with all faith and devotion, you will enjoy an ecstasy which comes from within. You get it independent of all external circumstances. When you once taste the Name, then other things will taste insipid. But you must have the foretaste of it before real detachment comes to you. That you will get when you sing the Name with faith, in the company of saints.

Once when Ramdas was wandering in the streets of Govardhan, he heard from a distance the singing of Ramnam and he was drawn to that place. About ten to twelve Bengalis were singing 'Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare,' with cymbals, etc., in chorus. It seemed as if one alone was singing with a loud voice. They produced such a vibration in the atmosphere that all those who were listening, including Ramdas, were lost in a divine rapture. It was a wonderful sight. He sat there for three hours until the Bhajan ended at midnight.

The whole night that music was ringing in Ramdas' ears. It was a blissful night. He had no sleep. In those days he had hardly any sleep. His tongue was uttering the Name and his ears were drinking its sweetness. He was losing himself in that sound. Sometimes Ramdas used to go to solitudes, quiet places, so that the sweet sound of Ramnam he was chanting might not be drowned in the noises of the world.

Name is the Saviour. Name is Brahman. You need not do any other Sadhana. Other Sadhanas do not yield results so quickly. There is no strain in Nama Japa. In the beginning it may not be attractive, but slowly your mind will tune itself to the Name. The mind will

be charmed by the Name as the snake is charmed by the music of the snake-charmer. The Name first quietens the mind and then instils into it an intoxicating sweetness.

25th May, 1961.

Q : What is the difference between the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and those of Sri Ramana Maharshi?

Ramdas: Ramdas is not competent to compare and judge the teachings of Sri Aurobindo and Sri Ramana Maharshi.

Q : Did Papa happen to see Swami Vivekananda?

Ramdas: He has not seen him.

Q : Swami Vivekananda says that freedom is the goal of the whole universe, whether we strive for it or not.

Ramdas: The goal is there, but the question is who wants to realize that goal. Every soul is in bondage and it should thirst for freedom even as those who are put into prison long for physical freedom.

Q: Of course, I am referring to the freedom of the soul.

Ramdas: That is the goal of every one who feels that he is caught in a prison. When he finds he is in bondage, he does struggle to get out of it — bondage of desires which has enslaved him. Does he do like that? He still strives to satisfy his desires, but finds he cannot. So he is held down by them. Our object should be to become desireless. In that state alone there is real happiness. Those who have freed themselves from the thralldom of desires — of ignorance — only enjoy eternal bliss. We do not get permanent happiness when we are

beset with desires. It is only when we conquer them that we get true freedom and happiness.

Q: Is there more advantage in writing than in repeating Ramnam?

Ramdas: Both ways are advantageous.

Q: Do they not derive more benefit by chanting?

Ramdas: Ramdas can testify to the fact that chanting or singing God's name grants everlasting peace. The mind becomes calm and serene. Those who write Ramnam for two or three hours a day also get the same experience. There is in this practice what they call co-ordination of sight, mind and hand with the result the mind ceases to wander. The mind gets concentrated. Then you release the hidden divine power which subdues thoughts and controls actions. All this is done either by writing or chanting Ramnam.

For those who have no work to do, the best thing is to write the Name. At once the mind gets attuned to the divine Name and experiences ecstasy. Ramdas could not sit in one place and write the Name. He was leading a wandering life and was only chanting the Name. To those who can sit for a long time, writing is all right. They find it very difficult to repeat the Name orally or mentally. When the mind, the eyes and the hand are co-ordinated, it will be easy to focus the mind on God.

Q: But after some time the writing becomes]
mechanical and the mind wanders.

Ramdas: The same thing happens also when chanting. The mind wanders if there is no love for the Name. If you have true devotion to God, then the Name

is very dear to you and your mind gets concentrated on it easily. It all depends upon the intensity of your devotion to God. Repeat the Name of God daily. In course of time it will put down distractions of the mind. There is infinite power in the Name.

Q : I think some more drastic method is required.

Ramdas: Drastic method is to get the mind detached. If a patient takes all kinds of food and also the medicine, the medicine does not act. He should observe diet. Here the diet for the devotee is Vairagya or detachment. Sadhana can bear fruit only if there is Vairagya. Otherwise the mind runs after sense-objects and the chanting becomes mechanical.

So far as chanting of Ramnam as Sadhana is concerned, the joy is felt from the very start of it, when Bhakti is there. When you sing God's name with all love and devotion, then joy rises in your heart in floods. Just as the moment you put a lozenge in your mouth you taste its sweetness, so also with the Name. After getting the sweetness you say, 'Oh God, I do not want You. I have got your Name. This is enough for me. I am drinking nectar. Your Name is sweeter than You. Let the Name be always on my tongue. Then I will enjoy ceaseless bliss. When You appear before me, there is joy, but when you disappear, I suffer pangs of separation.'

Q : Thyagraja sings like that.

Ramdas: Gopis said, 'We are satisfied with your remembrance. We do not want Moksha. We do not want Jnana. Let us remember you constantly. Remembrance means Darshan, Remembrance means pure unalloyed bliss. Your remembrance is everything. We want such Ananya_Bhakti.'

Sri Krishna is so gracious. It is said he gave them Jnana also unasked. So Gopis were said to be Jnani-Bhaktas. Jnana they got unasked, and Bhakti they asked for and got. The entire universe they saw as Sri Krishna. At first they were much attached to his form and they were sad at heart when he left for Mathura. After they were given Jnana; they got Parabhakti. Wherever they turned their eyes it was He. Gopis' Bhakti is unparalleled. They were mad of him. They were raised to the highest eminence of perfection. They became Krishnamaya so much so that whatever they saw, it was Sri Krishna, whatever they handled, it was Sri Krishna. Everywhere, inside, outside, in all things, it was Sri Krishna. So, when they were going to sell butter, instead of asking, 'Do you want butter, butter?' they would say, 'Do you want Krishna, Krishna?' Butter was Sri Krishna; milk was Sri Krishna; cows were Sri Krishna; everything was Sri Krishna. That was the state of Gopis after he left Brindaban.

Sri Ramakrishna first concentrated on the image of Kali. When initiated by Totapuri he got Jnana. He saw the whole universe as the manifestation of the Mother. After that he ceased to go to the temple for worship. The temple did not attract him as before. When flowers were brought for the deity he would put them on his own head. He himself had become Kali. Everybody was the manifestation of Kali. He became Kalimaya just as Gopis became Krishnamaya.

Q : So concentration on the Name is easier than concentration on the form.

Ramdas: Each one must follow the path which suits him best. If you want you can concentrate on an image. It was all right for Sri Ramakrishna. He was a

Pujari. He could be for long hours in the temple. It is not possible for all. Name you can chant at all times. Even in darkness you can take the Name. It will be with you at all times. So, in a way, chanting the Name is easier than worshipping an image. When you go away from the temple you forget it unless you enthrone the image in your heart. That is possible only after worshipping for a long time. It is a long process. But Ramnam you can have with you anywhere.

Q : Tukaram and Namdev — were they Nama Bhaktas?

Ramdas: They were going to the temple, no doubt, but the Name was their mainstay. At all times they were singing God's name. To Kabir, Thyagaraja and other saints the Name was all-sufficient. Name and form are not different. They are one and the same. Name itself is Brahman. But Brahman has no name or form. You give It name and form. You give the Name and utter the Name. By that you become one with Brahman. The Name sounds sweet because God is supreme bliss. His name is also Ananda, because the Name and He are not different.

Q : Can you not say that Tukaram neglected his duties?

Ramdas: The highest duty is to remember and realize God. The Gita says:

सर्वं धर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं व्रज ।

'Abandoning all duties come to Me alone for shelter.'

All worldly duties are to be abandoned. Certain standards of life are imposed on you to keep the society in harmony. But when you transcend these artificial

barriers you live in tune with the whole universe. When you attain universal vision and see the universe as the manifestation of God and love all beings with equal vision, then you create an atmosphere of unity and harmony all over the world. Your life is attuned to the life of the universe. This is the highest duty — taking refuge in God, surrendering yourself to Him. Before that supreme duty all other duties are of no importance. That is the purpose why you are here as a human being. When you surrender yourself to God, you know that God is the sustainer, protector, or master of the world. After the new vision comes to you — the vision of God in yourself and everywhere — you find God is the real protector and providence. If you do anything, it is by the will and power of God. Many think they are doing everything themselves: what happens to them? They find often that they are helpless. Even when you are taking care of anybody, you are doing so by His power and intelligence. Your hand cannot move unless His power actuates it. God is activating this body, the sun, the moon, everything in the universe. The Divine Shakti is active everywhere.

Knowing that God is the protector, the giver, all in all, let us be His humble servants — His awakened instruments. His power is active in us. This has been discovered by our sages and saints and they tell us that God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. We do not recognize this fact. We are conceited — it is not ordinary conceit, but colossal conceit. Reasoning, feeling, doing, are all possible only because God is within us. Otherwise this machine of a body will not function. If you dissect the body and try to find out God, you cannot see Him. He is Spirit or Atman. Man-made machines are only automatons. A machine cannot sit

like this and make you understand what it says. Ramdas talks and you understand. If you call the body a machine, it is a machine in which the Divine dwells. The indweller is the Soul or God.

The power of understanding is a wonderful faculty in a human being. You can take that itself as a distinguishing mark of a human being. He walks, talks and thinks: this is something infinitely superior to a mere machine. There cannot be any comparison between a human being and a machine. Scientists have made machines, done wonderful things, no doubt, but they cannot make a human being with all the intellectual and emotional faculties in him. There is a mysterious power which actuates us. Even reason cannot find out that supreme power which brought it into being and makes it work. Swami Rama Tirtha said, 'With a pair of tongs you can catch anything outside it. Can it catch the hand which holds it?' This body is controlled by a power which is superior to it.

You can put it this way: 'When the soul enters the Kingdom of God or Divine Consciousness, it has to cross a gate. When the soul enters, the intellect, the senses and all other vital energies seek entrance also. But the soul alone is allowed to go in. The others have no right of entry. And after the soul has gained admission, if the intellect, senses, etc., are asked what is there in the Kingdom of God, they reply: 'We have no entry into that divine realm. By our nature we have no ingress there because we are perishable. The soul alone can go in and get lost.' So the intellect cannot understand God who is infinite and eternal. How can you imagine or define that which is unthinkable and indescribable?

Therefore by the process of 'Neti, Neti' (negation) you have to define Brahman and not by the way of affirmation.

One who has realized the Truth cannot express what it is. Therefore Buddha has said, 'Do not dip the string of thought into the unfathomable. He who questions errs, he who answers errs.' No question is to be put and no answer is to be given. Buddha did not believe in a personal God. He attained the impersonal Reality. That state, he called Nirvana. He said this is liberation gained by the annihilation of desire. He never tried to define what Nirvana is. All-pervading, formless, still, calm — these are mere words. They convey nothing to you. If you want to know what it is, you must experience it. Hence if you are asked to describe what is Moksha or Jnana, you keep quiet. If you say anything about it, it is not that, because it is beyond thought and expression. Mouna is Brahman. If one simply quotes Slokas from books, it shows one is still in the intellectual plane. Those who have gone beyond it will merely keep silent, if asked what Brahman is.

Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram.



